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## Surrender: An Alchemical Act in Personal Transformation

Mary Beth G. Moze<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This article is the result of inquiring about human resistance to change. Specifically, it focuses on the act of surrender which engages, rather than avoids, the process of transformation. Due to the relatively sparse amount of literature on the subject of surrender, additional literature which parallels and compliments the subject is creatively woven in. The author comfortably injects criticism and interpretation of the literature and intermittently offers suggestions for further research efforts.

### Introduction

There is a moment in the process of personal development and transformation that is pivotal. It is the moment when we either enter into the process of change or avoid it. It is a point of resistance that is mystifying, often fearful, and begs to be understood. Having studied literature from the fields of psychology, sociology, and transformation theory, I offer to name the act that enters us into the process of change; it is called surrender.

Surrender is simple and yet complex. It can be inviting, not threatening. It can be fulfilling, not defeating. It is an act that does not merely effect a natural progression of change; it is alchemical in its magical ability to transmute us from one state of being into another. It is a tool that we can willfully employ for beneficial development.

This article is the result of my research to investigate the phenomenon of surrender. My goal is to help us understand it *more* so that we might fear it *less*. In so doing, we can help to make the process of personal development and change more inviting and less threatening. We can nurture human capacity to realize our potential, optimize it, and proactively evolve our individual and collective well-being.

### Transformation

In order to contextualize the role of surrender, I frame it within the transformative process. Transformation is a ten phase experience which starts with a disorienting dilemma and then leads into progressive stages of engaging and evolving our habits of mind (Mezirow, 2000). The key in transformation is to examine our taken-for-granted beliefs to either modify them or to reconfirm them based on enhanced ways of knowing. The purpose is to improve personal and collective well-being largely through improved relationships with self and other. It is more than a change in perspective, which is only a lateral move. Transformation is a vertical move that integrates greater truths and allows us to live life from a new way of knowing rather than just seeing it from a different perspective.

The ten phases of the transformative process are (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22):

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action

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7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

The first phase - a disorienting dilemma - initiates the process. This can occur by accident or by design. Since we tend to resist the moment of change, much less induce it proactively (Hawkins, 2002), transformation tends to be a consequence of traumatic experiences and borne of crisis rather than choice. Transformation need not be epochal; it can be incremental (Mezirow, 2000) and pursued deliberately. Of significance – whether encountered by accident or design – is that a disorienting dilemma is an invitation for growth, not a guarantee of growth.

Phases two and three represent the point at which we either enter further into the transformative process or avoid it. This is when the ego's fearful response to perceived challenges of its authority is most pronounced. The ego's fear is experienced as existential dread and can thwart transformation (Gozawa, 2005). Phases two and three are the point at which we can surrender our certainties to allow for their critical examination and assessment.

Courage is essential to transformation (Lucas, 1994), but courage is a character *trait* (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), whereas surrender is an *act* of character. Courage helps to enable surrender, but it is the actual act of surrender that advances the transformational process. Understanding the phenomenon of surrender helps to shine a light on the shadowy moment that we fear in the process of change and transformation.

#### Research

The subject of surrender is not noticeably addressed in transformation theory. There is some discussion of it in the fields of psychology and sociology, but at first blush, it seems too meager to satisfy an inquiry. As such, I did a sweeping search of the term surrender without narrowing in on specific disciplines. The results showed a clear distinction in three areas of conversation: political and military, spiritual, and psychological.

The role of surrender in the political and military literature is concerned with domination and control of perceived opponents. Its perspective is more about containment and limitations rather than expanding human capacity. Since my focus is directed toward human development and transformation, the conversations in that literature prove too unrelated to my investigation, and I negated them from my research.

Spiritual literature is abundant with discussion on surrender. Whether mentioned specifically or alluded to with phrases such as letting go and giving over, surrender is a common theme. The nature of surrender in spiritual literature is quite parallel to that in psychological discussions that view surrender as a valuable experience for personal development. Since the spiritual literature is fairly well established in its position on surrender, I chose to focus on the less developed conversations in the human sciences.

Ironically, I circled back to the preliminary findings in my first literature search in the fields of psychology and sociology. It is only after evaluating the broader literature that I am comfortable with this basis. Because of the dearth of - as well as a lack of connectedness within - that literature on surrender, I continued to search out material that had any relationship to the subject until the point of redundancy was clearly reached. I was led to content on control, agency, letting go, ego, and cultural differences. I was careful to not get sidetracked into the volumes of literature on the ego and to stay focused on the subject of surrender.

The redundancies I identified are the core organizing themes of this article. The information that surfaced when surpassing the redundancies became too far removed from the specific subject of surrender and warranted their own separate research. Examples of that include: literature on highly pathological behaviors; extensive discussion about ego development and depth psychology; and end of life issues.

Finally, I determined that the discussion of surrender would wisely include three categories: the theory or nature of surrender, the actual experience of it, and the practices that help develop the capacity for it. This article focuses on the first of these: the theory and nature of surrender and its role in personal development and transformation. This article aims to unite, solidify, and build upon the literature on surrender which currently exists. I also integrate related literature when it parallels or compliments the discussion.

#### Surrender – Historical Review

When mentioned in the literature, surrender tends to refer to a professionally observed act in therapy and is less often the actual subject of study itself. If surrender is the key focus, the literature falls on the pathology side of psychology and has mild mention, if any, as to its potential role in proactive development past normality. Because normality can be considered a form of developmental arrest (Shapiro, Schwartz, & Santerre, 2002), I am particularly interested in the role of surrender in proactive development past normality. I see surrender as a tool of choice in optimizing our potential and this is a constant lens through which I engage the literature.

It is readily apparent that there is no strong chronological development of the subject of surrender in the literature. Rather, there are a few raw pools of discussion, such as specializations in addictions, psychotherapy, and trauma. Yet, none of these are developed enough to fully represent the subject. Here are some highlights of an historical review of the literature.

Noteworthy is the obviousness of the first literature on surrender. It is all written by Harry M. Tiebout (1949, 1953, 1954). Tiebout was a psychiatrist and an internationally renowned expert on alcoholism. He is distinguished for investigating the philosophy and principles of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) within the science of psychiatry. He speaks directly about the subject of surrender. He refines the definition of surrender and suggests its function in releasing the grip of the ego toward the acceptance of powers greater than oneself. Tiebout believes strongly in valuing spirituality and the role of surrender to a higher power as being key in alcohol recovery. His reports on surrender are grounded in his application of AA principles within his psychiatric practices.

While literature on alcoholism is plentiful, there is little that specifically addresses surrender. White (1979), May (1982, 1988, 1991), Jones (1994), Vaughn & Long (1999), Wallace (2001), and Piedmont (2004) all discuss alcoholism with inclusion of surrender, and most of them include discussion of spirituality. While they each have their own areas of emphasis, it is noteworthy that they do not all cite Tiebout. Since the subject of surrender and addictions is historically grounded in Tiebout's work, this inconsistent citing exemplifies one of the curiosities I find in the literature: that the subject has no sense of home base or clear historical development overall.

Another pool of literature on surrender focuses on psychotherapy. While it can be argued that the subject of surrender is first alluded to in the work of Freud (Wallace, 2001), Hidas (1981) is the first to mention surrender specifically in relationship to psychotherapy. Hidas concentrates on transpersonal psychological theory and distinguishing the role that surrender plays at the deepest levels of psychological and spiritual work. After Hidas, other authors such as

Knoblauch and Falconer (1986), Viorst (1998), and Hart (2000) provide a meager trail that historically speaks about surrender, the ego, and psychotherapy. The smattering of literature that addresses surrender in relation to the ego is ironic, since the ego is a key player in the art of surrender. This continues to reveal that surrender has yet to establish itself as a distinct subject in the field of psychology and human development. It could be that the term surrender is couched in other acronyms such as detachment, but at this point in time there does not seem to be one term that is used to define the moment when the ego releases an attachment. Per chance surrender will become that term.

In addition to alcoholism and psychotherapy, the next most notable discussion on surrender is in relation to trauma (Atwood, Orange, & Stolorow, 2002; Branscomb, 1991, 1993) and interpersonal relationships (Ghent, 1990; Kaplan, 1984; LaMothe, 2005). Where Tiebout was inconsistently cited in literature on alcoholism, Winnecot (1958) seems to be the one inconsistently cited in this pool of discussion. His work on child development and object relationships does not highlight surrender as a developmental experience, but his theories are contextually supportive for many of these authors. Yet, the noticeable lack of his consistent citation feeds my struggle to find a common denominator or binding thread in the literature on surrender!

There is a lone article on surrender from the field of sociology, written by Wolff (1974). His is more of a seminal work in his personal quest to sociologically analyze and describe the phenomenon of surrender. He admits his own struggle to understand and articulate it. It stands alone from the literature in psychology, but his attempt to address the subject of surrender is so urgent and specific that it bears mention.

I find that the work of Levitt and her associates is highly relevant, even though they do not mention surrender specifically (Levitt, 1999; Levitt et al., 2004; Levitt, Stanley, Frankel, & Raina, 2005; Levitt, Butler, & Hill, 2006). Levitt's work with her colleagues is grounded in formalized, primary research. They integrate conversations across fields of psychology – cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, humanistic, and constructivist – to speak about personal transformation and that which helps clients in therapeutic relationships. Levitt et al.'s focus and tempo of work attempts to advance the discussions about psychotherapy, personal development, and transformation, alluding to surrender in discussions about fear, resistance, and relinquishing control. I include their work herein because of the unexpected links I see for cross-conversation about surrender. With minimal literature that addresses surrender specifically, especially in relation to transformation and personal development, I am being creative about finding interpretive parallels in order to build the story about the subject of surrender and its role in human development.

Interestingly, doctoral dissertations on surrender begin surfacing in 1993. Chronologically, these are the authors that I found which specifically studied surrender, along with their chosen contexts.

- Parlee (1993): the guru-disciple relationship
- Jones (1994): recovery from substance dependence
- Wallace (2001): an overall theoretical dissertation [which I found supportive in its review of spiritual traditions but particularly narrow in its coverage of the field of psychology and its columnar focus on depth psychology]
- Rutledge (2004): the physical experience of surrender, which creatively sought to proactively initiate the physical experience of surrender by use of exercise balls [which is a refreshing twist that looks at proactive surrender in the state of normality]

- Ferendo (2005): future oriented discussion in transpersonal psychology, which effectively covers Ken Wilber's works and nominally mentions the use of surrender in cultivating transformation and personal development.

Slowly, the conversation evolves from the spiritual camp through pathology and into proactive surrender. It is interesting that these dissertations all arise within just the last 15 years!

Upon keen inspection of the literature overall, I surmise an apparent struggle to be articulate about the phenomenon of surrender. I offer some suppositional comments here.

The earliest authors appear to include content from spiritual traditions. This might be an effort to support their observations about surrender, especially those in the domain of alcohol and addiction therapy. Later authors seem to grasp for analogies to better understand and explain their interest in the phenomenon of surrender and the points they want to make. For instance, some weave in use of mythical and indigenous cultural analogies (Branscomb, 1991, 1993; Grant, 1996; Palmer & Braud, 2002; Shapiro & Soidla, 2004; Soidla, 2002), while others use Eastern conversations about the present moment (Tolle, 1999) and mindful expression (Masters, 2000). Not all of these authors speak about surrender specifically, but they point in the same direction and I think it is telling that, chronologically, they use more and more ethereal means of expression to speak about surrender and personal development. This seems to indicate a lack of vocabulary with which to fully discuss surrender and its functional role in human development and transformation.

Aside from a few authors, the vast majority of those cited ground their comments and conclusions in both theory and observation. The observations are more within professional encounters with clients than they are contextualized within formal research efforts. I do not believe that this diminishes their value. It seems clear that the subject of surrender is organically surfacing within the field of psychology and may just be reaching the point of specific awareness to warrant deliberate studies about it. It is my belief that these notable practitioners are recognizing the significance of the role of surrender in human development and are expressing their observations in publicized articles. This is foundational to concentrating a focus on surrender and designing research about it.

The greatest value in examining the current literature on surrender, both chronologically and disciplinarily, is that it exemplifies its overall disconnection. While links can be drawn, it remains that there is no binding study that fully weaves the random threads nor soundly establishes a frame upon which to build.

It is my conclusion that the subject of surrender has not evolved with any degree of effort or concentration since Tiebout placed it soundly on the table for discussion in 1949. Wallace (2001) makes an attempt to coral the literature on surrender in his theoretical dissertation. He does a sound job of reviewing spiritual traditions and depth psychology, but I find that his work leaves out significant contributions from the broader field of psychology.

Several authors express the value of surrender in therapy and personal development and stress their concern about the lack of research about it. Hidas (1981) [transpersonal psychology] states the positive implications of the concept of surrender for use in psychotherapy. Shapiro and Fitzgerald (1989) [blending quantitative psychological measures with transpersonal psychology] promote transpersonal psychology as the fourth force in the field of psychology [built upon humanistic, behavioral, and psychoanalytic], and the need to research mystical phenomenon, within which surrender could be considered. Ghent (1990) [psychoanalysis] describes surrender as a detail in psychological discussions which dominantly focus on resistance without equal consideration of the healing process, the longing to grow, and the urge to surrender. Branscomb

(1993) [trauma therapy] admits that therapists are better at helping the clients to build trust in the therapeutic relationship than they are at helping the clients surrender to a greater trust in themselves. Jones (1994) [substance recovery] highlights that, in lieu of the benefits of surrender as noted in the work of Alcoholics Anonymous, scientific and psychological literature has done little to describe or validate the surrender experience. Levitt et.al. (2004, 2005) [psychotherapy and personal development] establishes that transformational moments can be understood by perspectives other than depth psychology, and that the purpose of any therapy – cognitive, behavioral, humanistic, or otherwise – is to help clients change; and change involves surrender into the transformational process. So while many are voicing their respect and value for the subject of surrender, it remains largely neglected.

A final consideration is that, over time, there does seem to be an increasing frequency of literature written about surrender. This may indicate a movement toward a critical mass on the subject that is bringing it closer to its own limelight for advanced study.

Because of the patchwork nature of the literature on surrender, I have completely reshuffled its chronology to reveal common themes embedded in the literature. These themes organize the remainder of this article. I shine the light squarely on the subject of surrender itself rather than talking *around* it as some literature does. Before I proceed, there are some definitions that will prove helpful.

#### Definitions

There are three terms which are helpful to define in order to more easily understand the remainder of this article: ego, narcissism, and other. While more complex definitions exist, the ones I provide here are simplified. This helps to stay focused on the subject of surrender without being distracted by complex terms. The simplification does not lose the core meanings housed in more complex definitions. These are terms with which to be *familiar*, not *expert*.

#### *Ego*

Ego is the term originally coined by Freud in the early 1900's to represent the aspect of our personality that attempts to balance our primitive and infant desires with moral considerations (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2003). The ego was understood as the negotiating agent between selfish wants and the capacity for delayed gratifications and consideration of others; its aim was to satisfy the needs of the self without violating moral values. Since that time, the term has taken on various interpretations that collectively leave it ambiguous in meaning (Tiebout, 1954).

Whereas Freud's ego was neutral and served more in a mechanistic manner, the ego with which we are most familiar today in laymen terms is the one that is prideful, arrogant, cares about itself rather than others, and thrives on perceived power and control (Cohen, 2000). This is akin to having an inflated ego, where *ego* and *inflated ego* are understood synonymously (Tiebout, 1954).

I borrow Tiebout's (1954) approach and distinguish the term *ego* to represent Freud's mechanistic internal negotiator and the term *Ego* to represent the inflated, prideful, self-righteous drive that selfishly, fearfully, and/or judgmentally motivates behavior.

The Ego is very narcissistic.

#### *Narcissism*

Narcissism is the excessive admiration of oneself. In psychological terms, it can represent a pathology of personality where one functions with very childish, infantile, and immature tendencies. These include: omnipotence, where one has a sense of exceptional rights well beyond the rights of others; ease of frustration, which shows up as intolerance; impatience, which desires

immediate gratification and has no appreciation for the delay of gratification; and a me-attitude, which considers the self first and foremost with a near disregard for others (Tiebout, 1954).

#### *Other*

In the manner I distinguish *ego* from *Ego*, I also distinguish *other* from *Other*. The term *other* represents the neutral distinction between one's self as separate from an other. The term *Other* represents the same distinction but is *not* neutral; it has a charge about it.

Transformation includes the examination of personal beliefs and this opportunity presents itself most often when we meet Other. Other is all that threatens our beliefs, opinions, and sense of right-ness. Other can be represented by a specific person, groups of people, cultures, lifestyles, ideologies, things, mannerisms, and anything that triggers a sense of being in contradiction to us. Other is distinguished when reason falters and defensive fantasies flourish (Kearney, 2003).

The experience of threat and protective response that is elicited when we encounter Other can range anywhere from minimal to catastrophic. We tend to resist Other by the degree to which we feel challenged. If we function from primal instincts and unconscious habits-of-mind rather than from mindful awareness and non-judgment, we tend to respond to Other with forms of fear, anger, or avoidance.

It is Other which provides us with the resistance necessary for personal growth (Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998) and it is the psychological geography where surrender, examination of beliefs, and transformation occur. In its simplest terms, Other is everything that we discern to be not-us and against which we have a resistant response.

#### Themes of Surrender

The themes herein are those aspects of surrender which have redundant mention in the literature. Not every author necessarily mentions each of these themes. Instead, they show up with sufficient repetitiveness to warrant their distinction. These themes create cross-conversation with the literature, improved vocabulary, and targets for empirical research.

#### *Cultural Distinctions About Surrender*

Before attempting to define and discuss surrender, a look at cultural differences with regard to surrender is worthwhile. Basic distinctions can be made between Eastern, Indigenous, and Western cultural understandings of Ego, surrender, and transformation. These distinctions help to contextualize the content of this article with a global perspective, and further ground the historical development [or absence] of surrender in Western literature.

Eastern culture understands that: Ego represents the illusion of one's identity; surrender has to do with transcendence and liberation, not defeat; and the goal of development *is* renovation of one's beliefs and is usually pursued deliberately (Ghent, 1990; Levitt, 1999). Such proactive pursuit may involve cathartic experiences, but also allows for more incremental and less shattering transformational experiences as well. Eastern cultures focus on community rather than individuality and foster spiritual development in addition to practical personal development.

Indigenous societies do not speak about the ego or the Ego. They do, however, enthusiastically embrace the notion of surrender and actually sanction it in their cultural rituals (Branscomb, 1993; Ghent, 1990; Halifax, 1999; Houston, 1985). Their ritual rites of passage are geared for adolescents and young adults for the proactive attainment of wisdom; they do not wait for wisdom to accidentally develop as a consequence of age. They valorize personal development through instigated processes of change that take the initiates away from that which is familiar to enter into unknowns that challenge their capacities. They enter into unknown geography, unknown psychological functioning, and unknown methods of learning. The goal is to gain knowledge through experiential discovery and new ways of knowing, and then to return



to the community with the wisdom gained (Branscomb, 1993; Halifax, 1999). Such paths of development are mythical, where the hero/ine engages challenge, is sacredly wounded, perseveres, gains new insights, and returns to the community (Houston, 1985; Grant, 1996). This is a process of disorientation, surrender, discovery, reflection, and return, which is very parallel to the ten phase process of transformation. Mythical paths necessarily include acts of surrender (Branscomb, 1993).

There is a universal longing for the experience of surrender: a longing to know others and to be known by others (Ghent, 1990). Both Eastern and Indigenous cultures understand the limits to intellectual and psychological knowledge and believe in the requirement to go beyond these limits to seek answers to the deep questions of life and the process of knowing self and other (May, 1982). They integrate surrender as a natural and expected act in the human experience. The journey of life is a journey of surrender (May, 1982). They enfold this longing to surrender and to be known in their cultural focus on community and their beliefs and methods about personal development (Ghent, 1990).

In the West, this longing to surrender and be known becomes buried or consciously rejected in the push for independence and individuality (Ghent, 1990). Ego has been exacerbated by Western society's promotion of individualism and the belief that one can have absolute mastery over one's life. The notion of mastery creates an inner contradiction with the desire for surrender (May, 1982) and surfaces as pathological behaviors (Ghent, 1990).

Western culture also objectifies other as being not-me (Gozawa, 2005) and rigidifies the division between self and other. How sad that the same other that is longed to be known becomes the Other that is judged and resisted. Jungian depth psychology is a Western psychotherapy that seeks to understand Other by investigating the shadow side of ourselves, which represents Other within us and addresses some of the pathologies that arise from unrealized surrender (Branscomb, 1991). Where therapies based on Eastern culture emphasize transformation and presume that the transformative experience is the cure which provides insights, therapies based on Western culture emphasize the gathering of information and presume that intellectual insights provide cures (Ghent, 1990). This shifts the role of surrender.

In addition, Western society promotes a consumer mentality that thrives on – and yet is overwhelmed with choices for – immediate gratification (Easterbrook, 2003; Myers, 2001; Schwartz, 2004). This is in direct conflict to the act of surrender or any delay in gratification. The consumer mentality feeds selfish desires and weakens the influence of moral values, thereby morphing the ego into the Ego. Western society encourages seduction of the senses but ultimately denies its satisfaction, and the longings to surrender become frustrated and perverted (Hawkins, 2002). Egoic thinking is a hallmark of current Western collective consciousness.

The sacred wounds of Indigenous paths of development show up in Western culture as trauma (Houston, 1985) and failed logic perceived as crisis (Hidas, 1981; Kearney, 2003). In the West, the heroic image is that of a conqueror who is already wise and accomplished as he enters battle and returns proven, as opposed to Indigenous images of man entering the mythical unknown, becoming wounded, persevering through to gain wisdom, and returning to humbly share the learnings (Branscomb, 1991). There is no room for surrender in the image of a conquering hero.

Basically, Western culture suggests that: Ego represents strength and is unconsciously reinforced through confrontational attitudes and behavior; surrender means defeat; and the goal of development is the accumulation of facts (Ghent, 1990; Halifax, 1999). Information seems to be revered over wisdom. Transformation is accidental, not pursued. Psychological literature

consensually agrees that insights – suggestive of those gained in indigenous rites of passage – prompt therapeutic change, yet there is little agreement about how such events can be realized (Levitt et. al., 2004).

Western human development is more about collection of facts, not understanding tacit knowledge (Ghent, 1990). Western culture does not glorify spiritual development or ways of knowing other than logic. We have no cultural practices that valorize or support the walk through disorienting dilemmas; instead we avoid them. We have ages and events that are culturally significant, such as turning the ages of 18 and 21, or graduating from high school or college and getting married. Western culture also focuses on the stages of development as outlined in several models of human development, such as Piaget's cognitive-stage model of development or Erikson's psychosocial theory of development (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2004). Some of the existential and humanistic fields of psychology emphasize more spiritual aspects of development, such as Maslow's and Roger's focus on self-actualization (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2003), but the existential and humanistic fields of psychology are fairly undeveloped, largely because they are seen as having an overly optimistic impression of humankind that cannot be studied empirically and which therefore go unfunded (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2003).

Jung was the first theorist to present an adult development model (Papalia et al., 2004), but this was again a stage theory, and focusing more on depth psychology than transpersonal psychology. Kohlberg advanced the work of Piaget and the aspects of moral development that Piaget addressed (Papalia et al., 2004), but Kohlberg's model of moral reasoning is still stage related and sustains a normative focus rather than incorporating advanced development theory or transformation. Only in the more recent years have research efforts been focused with effort on development models that incorporate dimensions of well-being other than stage-related criteria (Demick & Andreoletti, 2003; Papalia et al., 2004), but these too remain more scientific and normative rather than spiritual and transpersonal, and tend to focus on adult development rather than suggesting that adolescents and young adults can also have developmental trajectories that are less defined and more inclusive of spiritual development. An attempt at promoting such discussion was available in a book called *Higher Stages of Human Development* (Alexander & Langer, 1990), but the fact that it went out of print within years of its publication is an indicator of the current inability of Western culture to move beyond scientific and normative perspectives on human development.

Aside from the distinctions between the three cultures, similarities do exist. All three – East, Indigenous, and West – seek to move toward the inner essence of man. The East does this by dissociating from the worldly self and attachment to things (Levitt, 1999); Indigenous societies do this by instigating the development of wisdom (Halifax, 1999); and the West does this by encouraging positive self-evaluation based more on subjective information than external judgments by others (Levitt, 1999). The East and West also concern themselves with existential anxiety: the East seeks to evolve the illusion of Ego as self to realize that existence is more than materially viewed, and the West attempts to help people feel more secure about themselves (Levitt, 1999). Either way existential dread is reduced.

There is also a complimentary nature to Eastern, Indigenous, and Western approaches to human development: some build toward wholeness and spirit, while another seeks to stabilize a position and limit being pulled toward victimization. Eastern and Indigenous methods move toward the realization of the unity of mankind and surrendering to spiritual wills (Houston, 1985; May, 1982), while Western methods promote autonomy and the moving away from oppression, or avoiding the type of surrender that equates to submission to a person or a group (May, 1982).

Western culture seeks to build up the individual and has done a tremendous job in that role. Western culture has keyed in on the value of differentiation in the process of human development, but currently does not have cultural rituals or education in place to healthily surrender and evolve the integration phase of development. All of the cultures value the human element. They differ in their understanding and use of surrender in the process of growth.

It is important to realize that ages, events, or stages in human development might be considered transitional, but they are not necessarily transformational. Also, enhancements in self-evaluation and reductions in existential dread do not necessarily equate to transformation either. Transformation is not a shift in how one sees life; it is a shift in how one engages and lives life (Mezirow, 2000). Therefore, surrender - so key in the transformational paths of development in Eastern and Indigenous societies - seems to play a key role in personal development, gaining wisdom, integrating knowledge, and optimizing human potential. Surrender – its connotation and its role in personal development – needs refreshment and reintroduction in Western culture.

### *Surrender Defined*

The prior section on cultural distinctions helps to view surrender in global terms. It also serves to frame my attempt here at defining surrender for a Western audience.

As indicated, Western culture has an antipathy toward the notion of surrender. Our cultural myth holds us as conquerors, not has hero/ines, and only allows room for glory, not surrender (Branscomb, 1991). Our focus on individualism and materialism, along with our ego-enhancement approaches to psychotherapy, results in mindsets that exacerbate our Egoic tendencies toward resistance. This magnifies dualistic perspectives and polarizes the self from Other. Any degree of Ego release or leaning in toward an Other smacks of defeat. The goal of Ego is to win, dominate, and be in control. Our cultural norms offer no possibility of constructive surrender (May, 1982).

The definitions of surrender that lend themselves to this Egoic worldview are based on resistance and have taken precedence in Western culture. Such definitions read: to relinquish control to another because of demand; to give up; to abandon all hope; to resign oneself to something, as in capture; to give oneself up to an enemy (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language). These definitions align with the militaristic literature that is specifically not included in my research and does not address the more inviting side of surrender.

The alternative definition of surrender reads: to give up in favor of another (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language). While this definition describes a giving *up*, it refreshes the meaning of surrender in terms of giving up *in favor of* another. This is less the giving *up* with which people acquaint the term and is more about the giving *over* of something with a willingness (Branscomb, 1993). This definition of surrender has lost its familiarity not only in Western culture, but in the sciences as well. Surrender is a term seldom found in psychoanalytic literature and is obscure in meaning when it is used (Ghent, 1990).

Before pursuing a definition of what surrender *is*, it is helpful to benchmark what it is *not*. Some terms are used synonymously with surrender but have subtle shifts in meaning that differ significantly from the healthy version of surrender that grounds this article. Those terms include submission, resignation, and compliance.

Submission entails a role of domination by one over another and is a perversion of surrender (LaMothe, 2005). It is an individual's conscious acceptance of reality but tainted with an unconscious unacceptance that harbors the desire for eventual revenge (Tiebout, 1949). Submission sustains the tension between self and Other and houses distrust and a sense of betrayal (LaMothe, 2005; Tiebout, 1949). It is often a defense against hopelessness and the fear

of the annihilation of one's sense of identity (LaMothe, 2005). It resembles surrender in its longing to know and be known, but cheats the process by sustaining a role of bondage and a sense of futility (Ghent, 1990).

Resignation holds an element of judgment (Tolle, 1999) which is contrary to the unconditional nature of healthy surrender. Resignation moves one into accordance with another, but not based on shared beliefs nor trust and often as a result of exhausted failed efforts to negotiate a mutually satisfying interpersonal relationship. It often accompanies the role of submission (Ghent, 1990). Both submission and resignation have a resistant quality about them which maintains an Egoic position, not a state of surrender. To a certain degree, there is a sense of longevity to the roles of submission and resignation.

In comparison, compliance has a temporariness about it. Like resignation, it entails a *going along with* attitude while not necessarily approving of that to which one resigns. However, compliance is more about saying yes in the moment more for the sake of convenience than for the sake of acceptance. Compliance contributes to a sense of guilt, inferiority, and shame for not standing up for oneself and it also deceives all of those involved with the circumstance (Tiebout, 1953).

The more inviting definition of surrender appeals to its resilient nature, not its resistant nature. Resistance operates against growth or change and seeks to maintain the familiar, while surrender and resilience operate toward growth (Ghent, 1990). Rather than an Egotistical defeat, healthy surrender is a compassionate giving over that rests on trust (LaMothe, 2005). Such surrender involves commitment, openness, soulful motivation, and vibrancy.

Total surrender unconditionally yields to what *is* (Tolle, 1999) rather than to what one *prefers* or *expects*. It is a wholehearted acceptance of one's perception of reality and unreservedly yields to more than the Ego (Cohen, 2004; Jones, 1994; Tiebout, 1953). Judgments are suspended. One is involved in a code of integrity and unity with Other, and admits to not knowing the full meaning of an encounter, especially in the moment it occurs (Parlee, 1993; Wolff, 1974). This allows for openness of experience and fully embraces the unknown (May, 2004).

Surrender is liberation, expansion of self, and the letting down of defensive barriers (Ghent, 1990). It is something that takes place within one's self and contingent only upon one's willingness to let down the barriers that one alone puts up: to give up resistances, defenses, and self-preconceptions in service of healing, acceptance, and seeking to know Other (Branscomb, 1993; Jones, 1994; Tiebout, 1949). Surrender is an existential reality that does not objectify self or Other and rather identifies with limitlessness (May, 1982). Surrender need not be permanent; it can be a temporary relinquishment of control and suspension of beliefs (Hart, 2000). It leaves intellectual knowledge in tact while releasing one to inquire further about truths (Rutledge, 2004) without an agenda for expected outcomes (Wolff, 1974). It involves curiosity that is attracted to meaning, not oddity.

Surrender is a particular way of functioning, motivated by the longing for growth and connectedness (Ghent, 1990). It is soulful. Such willingness rests on and is motivated by trust, faith, hope, and heart based desires for meaning; it appeals to that which dignifies and ennobles (Hawkins, 2002). Surrender is an act of faith and a statement of hope based on trust (Hart, 2000). Surrender of this nature reacquaints us with our humanness and innocence, not our individuality, and enables us to see the good in Other and in the world (Branscomb, 1993; Wolff, 1974). It nourishes the needs of the soul and gently releases the wants of the Ego (Zukav, 1990).

An *act* of surrender is inevitably followed by a *state* of surrender (Tiebout, 1949), free of time and space (Hart, 2000). Surprisingly, surrender is vibrant, not passive. It is an intimate state of involvement (May, 1982) in which one actively constructs an experience while choosing to give in – to lean in toward – another (LaMothe, 2005). There is a dynamic flow of emergence and waning that actualizes the potential for enhanced meaning and communion with Other (LaMothe, 2005). One does not passively tolerate a situation nor cease personal action; instead, there is an awareness and reciprocity of responsiveness that is improvisational and uncontrolling (Rutledge, 2004; Tolle, 1999). To improvise is to be intuitively creative; it is a universal capacity!

I do not posit a linear relationship between trust, commitment, openness, soulful motivation, and vibrancy. The literature does not suggest anything in this regard. What is noteworthy is the simultaneous simplicity and complexity of a resilient act of surrender. It is alchemical. It is not an act that simply initiates a natural progression of potential change; it is an innately complex function that transmutes one way of being into another.

I hesitate to offer a definition of surrender, fearing that it will be concretized. Surrender has a wholesomeness that is elusive and not easily definable. For the sake of grounding the remaining contents of this article, I offer the following definition as support, not absolute.

Surrender is a trusting act to which one fully commits and lets go of absolute perceived control and personal defenses in order to step into a limitless unknown and actively engage Other, allowing for the potential discovery of greater truths while being unattached to any expected outcomes.

Even more simply stated, surrender is a faithful gesture toward knowing Other and being known.

#### *Types of Surrender*

It is less necessary to define surrender in absolute terms, than it is to appreciate the essence of an act of surrender as more resilient in nature than resistant. If the term surrender is used herein without any qualifying adjective, it is understood as the resilient form of surrender. I specify this because this section presents a variety of *types* of surrender with their own qualifying adjectives. The various adjectives used by the authors represent their expressive attempts to discuss and define surrender from their vantage points, not that they represent standardized disciplinary rhetoric. This evidences the lack of vocabulary with which to commonly speak about the phenomenon of surrender.

I present the types of surrender as revealed chronologically for the sake of organization, not that it represents any historical development in conversation that I could discern. The fact that these various types of surrender largely hail from authors within the field of psychology without cross-referencing one another seems a bit indicative, to me, of two things. First, the authors strive to address their observations of a psychological phenomenon that they collectively describe as surrender, but in ignorance of each others' similar observations. This evidences professional vacuums of information while also hinting at the bubbling nature of the subject. Second, surrender seems to function consistently across many domains of psychological function, which highlights the value of researching it deliberately to discern its proactive applicability to psychological well-being, personal development, and transformation.

#### *Recovery Surrenders*

Tiebout (1949, 1953, 1954) discusses the role of surrender in alcoholism and recovery. While he did not coin the term *recovery surrender*, I am using it to distinguish the specific conversation about the type of surrender(s) mentioned in the literature on alcoholism as opposed to the types identified in the other literature on surrender.

The first three steps in Alcoholics Anonymous' twelve step process specifically address the need to surrender, especially surrender from Egoic tendencies (Wallace, 2001). The qualities that exist in an alcoholic before surrender are defiance and grandiosity, both of which are exaggerated behavior symptoms of the Ego (Tiebout, 1949). Due to the consuming nature of alcohol addiction, it is generally agreed that the initial surrender in recovery occurs as a result of hitting bottom or realizing that all known options of functioning have failed and there is no where else to turn. The Ego hits and recognizes its limits. At this point, the alcoholic decides to give up the battle with alcohol and surrender to the need for help (Tiebout, 1949).

Alcoholics Anonymous considers the spiritual component in step three of the process – the conversion experience of turning one's will over to a higher power - pivotal in reducing the Ego and achieving abstinence and preventing relapse (Jones, 1994; White, 1979). May (1982) stresses that the higher power needs to be non-objectified and limitless. Surrender to a limitless higher power simultaneously acknowledges one's limitations and responsibilities.

While hitting bottom is a crisis moment and instigates surrender, it is only the first in a series of surrenders in the recovery process and is not fully transformative in-and-of itself. Giving-in may be sudden, but it is generally the start of a slower alteration in personality and subsequent behavior (Tiebout, 1949; White, 1979). For an alcoholic, surrender is a lifelong process that generally starts with crisis and continues thereafter in successive and varying forms, generally going progressively deeper in the psyche to more pervasive levels of influence and becoming more and more intentional as well as spiritual over time (Jones, 1994).

There is no obvious consensus as to whether surrender is unconscious or not, which suggests an area for research. Since recovery surrenders do become more intentional over time, this implies both conscious and proactive qualities. Therefore, proactive surrender can be an effective tool for personal development, at least as evidenced in alcohol recovery.

#### *Therapeutic Surrender*

Therapeutic surrender appears to be the lone term used by Hidas (1981) to describe a negative experience in psychotherapy in which the client's reality dissolves, bringing them into closer contact with unitive forces that provide foundation for a positive alteration of the self. He specifies this as a psychological experience, whereas recovery surrender is both psychological and spiritual (Jones, 1994). Therapeutic surrender is characterized by emptiness. Hidas views surrender as the vulnerable beginning to profound reorientation to life.

Hidas (1981) also suggests that therapeutic surrender has little value in therapies such as treatment for weight control or vocational rehabilitation, and is more geared toward depth-oriented and transpersonal psychotherapy. Such a stipulated limit on the value of surrender – even the negative version of it that Hidas defines - represents a narrow vision for its potential role in human development overall.

#### *Altruistic Surrender*

Altruistic surrender is a term used by Kaplan (1984) entwined with her work in developmental psychology. Altruistic surrender is a pathologized version of empathy. Where empathy seeks to temporarily identify with others for the sake of understanding and sensitivity, altruistic surrender carries this to an extreme, where the distinction between self and other is lost. This blending of self with other is of a pathological nature, not of the enlightened form where one recognizes self within collective unity; it is a transference of self. Altruistic surrender is a maladaptive preoccupation with another resulting from faulty boundaries. Altruistic surrender is the manifest opposite of narcissism and is the extreme overcorrection away from narcissistic tendencies. It sacrifices one's own development for the advancement of another.

While May (1982) does not use the term altruistic surrender, he does mention what he terms distorted surrender. In these cases, a person surrenders to an objectifiable other: a person, a cause, a group. Such surrendering is self-preservational because one objectifies another and thereby reaffirms the self in comparison. This surrender *feels* selfless but it is not. It seems very similar to altruistic surrender. People, groups, or causes can be *vehicles* for surrender; it is just when they become the *object* of surrender that the act is distorted and dysfunctional.

Shapiro and Soidla (2004) are not speaking about surrender when they discuss obsessed attention, but I find a correlation worth noting here. They address the role of attention and one's capacity to hear inner wisdom, and they caution against becoming too obsessed about the exact direction of one's attention. They advise that productive attention is a kind of half-attention: the art of looking and not looking at the same time, or the art of having *soft eyes*. This attention is open and receptive and results in a state of effortlessness where nothing seems to happen and yet change is effected. Obsessed attention sounds like altruistic surrender, and soft eyes sound similar to resilient surrender.

The story builds in how practitioners are identifying surrender as a component in human functioning and how they are attempting to further describe and understand it.

#### *Cathartic and Primary Surrender*

Branscomb (1993) specializes in the psychology of trauma and distinguishes two types of surrender that she identifies and defines: cathartic surrender and primary surrender.

Cathartic surrender involves the letting down of defenses that protect one from the memory of the traumatic event. This involves *both* a voluntary re-living of the trauma and a voluntary yielding or surrender of power to the therapist. This surrender frees the client to display the event and the wound in a trusted environment and not feel burdened with having to manage it alone. Cathartic surrender occurs first in therapy and sets the stage for primary surrender. It is worth noting that Branscomb does not mention Hidas (1981) and his term of therapeutic surrender.

Primary surrender is a creative and reconstructive core change in one's beliefs and feelings about oneself and the world. Where cathartic surrender is about shedding layers of pain, primary surrender actually restructures personality. It is a surrender to a process that promotes change in emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions and alters one's interface with self and Other. The core change helps one to reclaim implicit trust in Others; it is the surrender to believing in the good in Others which potentiates relationships. Where the therapist is more in charge of cathartic surrender, the client is in charge of primary surrender.

Atwood et al. (2002) address trauma in regard to annihilation of one's sense of identity and relationships. They highlight the therapist-client relationship as key in the client's readiness to surrender to conversation about their trauma and that they must first feel safe and understood before they open up; there must be a field of mutuality. They add that annihilations via trauma are different than those of psychosis or mania. Specifically, trauma attacks the clients' sustaining connections with humankind, whereas in psychosis and mania, human ties are left somewhat intact. As a researcher, I find myself curious as to whether the nature of surrender would be different – both purposefully and phenomenologically – for trauma victims versus clients of dissociative disorders. This is another area in which research on surrender could be valuable.

Branscomb (1993) talks about the need for trust and security in order for cathartic surrender to occur, but her discussion of both cathartic and primary surrender speak more about their function than about their affective impact, so we can only infer whether they are of resistant or resilient natures. Cathartic surrender seems similar to initial surrender in alcohol recovery and

to therapeutic surrender with its letting down of defenses. Primary surrender sounds similar to conversion surrender in alcohol recovery and seems more descriptive of the transformation of habits-of-mind. Branscomb admits that therapists have limited capacities in assisting primary surrender. I suggest that further development of the subject of surrender can assist in this area.

It continues to be seen that the subject of surrender lacks common language, has yet to establish a home base, and is discussed in silos rather than cross-conversationally.

#### *Transformative Surrender*

Wallace (2001) offers his definition of a type of surrender in his theoretical doctoral dissertation. He covers both spiritual literature and depth psychology literature. His definition of transformative surrender reads (p. 59):

Surrender is the act of letting go or giving up real or symbolic aspects of one's self through either a voluntary or nonvolitional process in order to maintain or re-establish a transpersonal relationship but without foreknowledge of the actual outcome.

Wallace (2001) stresses a teleological component. He believes this component is left out of analytical psychologies which only consider surrender as initiating stages of individuation.

Wallace (2001) concludes that surrender and transformative surrender are part of healthy, on-going psychological development. First episodes of surrender, especially the transformative type, are affectively laden and difficult to engage. Part of this is due to the novelty of the experience. Subsequent surrenders become comparatively easier due not only to their familiarity, but also because the Ego has become more manageable in the process. Both Wallace and Jones (1994) mention the developmental ease of successive surrender efforts. It suggests that, with repeated effort, surrender can become more integrated in one's lifestyle and ways of being.

#### *Safe Surrender*

This is a meager section meant to document that the term surrender is finding its way into new areas of psychology. Safe surrender is considered the item being *sold* during hostage negotiations (Holloway, 2003). The evolving field of correctional psychology is developing the role and capacity of hostage negotiators. These negotiators hone their skills in both psychology and sales, knowing the psychological nuances that might be functioning within the hostage taker, as well as appreciating and applying the skills of salesmanship in which one evaluates needs and offers solutions. Their goal is to convince the hostage taker that there is such a thing as safe surrender.

This could be viewed as militaristic surrender with its attempts at coercion. At the same time, hostage negotiations respect the need to create an environment of trust and safety and the belief in the good of others. This aligns with the nature of surrender described herein.

#### *Surrender and Surrender-To*

It is prudent to include Wolff's (1974) types of surrender mentioned in his seminal work in sociology. He differentiates between surrender and *surrender-to*. He states that surrender is unconscious, where the object to which one surrenders is not objectified and is virtually identical with the subject's function.

As he describes surrender, it sounds very similar to a psychological state called flow. Flow is the state of total psychic engagement in a task with no awareness of space, time, or outcome: a state of arousal and a sense of capacity without a conscious intention to control the situation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Flow is obtainable because of the flexibility in human consciousness. Wolff's surrender, where the object is identical to the subjects function, seems



curiously similar to flow, where a task or function is so consuming as to make the subject unconsciously engaged with it.

This, as compared to Wolff's (1974) *surrender-to*, which is a *conscious* dedication and devotion to something: an object of exhaustive concern. It has characteristics of surrender but includes consciousness and direct aim toward something. The caveat is that, if that to which one surrenders-to unexpectedly shifts into an infinite, non-objectified role, then *surrender-to* becomes surrender.

Wolff (1974) suggests that both surrender and *surrender-to* are fully devoted to the task; the distinctions are unconsciousness versus consciousness, and identification with an infinite other versus objectified other. Wolff's surrender matches with May's (1982) surrender in alcohol recovery: that surrender must be to a non-objectified and limitless other.

Wolff (1974) further typifies surrender by mentioning what he calls false surrender. False surrender is an attempt at authentic surrender that fails. He describes one type of false surrender as *aborted* surrender, which is surrender that gets sabotaged by the rigidity of one's beliefs and halts the forward progress of authentic surrender. He also describes another false surrender as *betrayed* surrender in which a person suspends too much of their self and equivalently loses their self identity in the process. This sounds similar to altruistic surrender. The dangers of both – aborted surrender and betrayed surrender – can be avoided by awareness of them and caution against them.

At this point, some of the distinctions in types of surrender get quite blurred. I repeat myself and suggest that this represents the lack of vocabulary and common understanding about surrender.

#### *Related Material*

In my attempt to net as much literature on surrender as possible, I offer two subjects which surfaced from the field of transpersonal psychology. One is called heart anger; the other is called exceptional human experiences (EHE's). The literature on these does not mention surrender, but the parallels incline me to mention them.

Heart anger is an alternative to conventional approaches to anger management. Conventional approaches ask people to either hold anger in or to exuberantly discharge it in a protected environment (Masters, 2000). Heart anger allows one to openly express anger but with compassion toward the person involved and being mindful of one's coexistence with them. It is expressed anger infused with care and awareness of Other. It both discharges energy *and* expands energy, such that it opens up the sense of space. It is not a submission to anger but a nonobstruction of energies in which one both rides the release and is also paradoxically swept along with it. The combination of release, openness, engagement with Other, and the paradox within the experience all match aspects of surrender.

Exceptional human experiences (EHE's) are non-ordinary and transcendent experiences that may serve as gateways to realize one's full potential (Palmer & Braud, 2002). They include, but are not limited to, occasions such as transformational experiences, unitive experiences, or altered perceptions of either space or time. What is interesting is that people have a tendency to not disclose their stories about such experiences, both out of fear for how they will be received by others as well as not wanting to recreate the unsettling experience for themselves. It was determined that, when people who had EHE's *did* disclose their stories, the outcomes included a sense of oneness, reduced stress, and overall improved well-being. These attributes are shown to be associated with surrender. I not only see an alignment with the disclosure of EHE's as similar

to surrender – especially to the descriptions of cathartic surrender - but I also see surrender as an EHE itself, also serving as a gateway to realize one's potential!

Heart anger and EHE's show similarities to conversations about surrender in the larger field of psychology. I mention them to help open veins of discussion that can mutually pulse complimentary areas of interests and research.

#### *Conscious or Unconscious*

One of the more obvious points of contention in the literature is whether surrender is a conscious or an unconscious event.

Wolff (1974) is adamant that surrender is an unconscious event whereas surrender-to is a conscious event. He offers minimal substance to frame his comments. What is noteworthy is that he mentions the difference between a conscious and an unconscious surrender and contributes to the significance of consciousness as a relevant theme to surrender.

With regard to recovery surrender and alcohol addictions, Tiebout (1953) states that Ego forces and perceived reality function on an unconscious level. As such, the emotional acceptance when one admits that they need help in the hitting bottom experience occurs at the same level from which the resistant behaviors function: the unconscious. In this case, there is a triggering event – hitting bottom – that suggests an unconscious shift, and yet the dominance of the Ego and unconscious mind can be superseded (May, 1982; Tiebout, 1953).

For trauma victims, the traumatic events induce a type of disbelief that limit the victims' ability to take in the shocking information (Ghent, 1990). As a result, compromising behaviors often take over, such as submission or denial, in order to keep the disorienting information out of one's prevailing belief system lest it annihilate one's subjective understandings and collapse the ability to function (Ghent, 1990; LaMothe, 2005). In this case, trauma is *managed* at an unconscious level, but the process of dealing with the event and surmounting its negative impact on one's life occurs at the conscious level. In therapy, both the surrender to the therapist - cathartic surrender - and the surrender to one's self to examine one's beliefs and re-establish a benevolent impression of Others - primary surrender - occurs at the conscious level (Branscomb, 1993). The Ego initiates unconscious compromising behaviors during trauma because it cannot handle the assault on its way of knowing the world. Thereafter, processing the trauma via surrender becomes a conscious event.

Hidas (1981), in the field of depth psychology, sees surrender as a function that occurs at the deepest levels of psychological or spiritual work in one's efforts to transcend the Ego. He sees it functioning as an opening for the possibility of integrating greater truths about self and Other that can be triggered by a crisis *or* initiated by soul-searching work. If compromising behaviors dominate, then the unconscious Ego is in charge. If self-examination takes place, consciousness is involved. He admits that surrender may contain both the unconscious emotions and the conscious cognition of events.

Hidas (1981) adds another element to the discussion: volition. He states that surrender is involuntary. Wolff (1974), on the other hand, believes that surrender or the suspension of beliefs can be unexpected *or* willed. Because the bulk of Hidas's discussion focuses on crisis borne surrender, I'm inclined to wonder if surrender tends to be involuntary in situations of duress, and that in less stressed or forced situations, surrender can indeed be voluntary. We see another research opportunity here. At this point, whether surrender is voluntary, involuntary, or both lacks consensus.

As for consciousness, others offer that surrender can be conscious *and/or* unconscious. Viorst (1998) readily admits that surrender can be conscious *or* unconscious. Wallace (2001)

describes surrender as bringing one's consciousness together with one's unconsciousness. Rutledge (2004) says that the use of thought can help to induce surrender but that the actual act is less intellectual and more visceral or spiritual. This does not necessarily say that it is unconscious, yet it does allude to an unconscious quality; it sounds similar to the art of looking with soft eyes, as mentioned in the discussion on Altruistic Surrender.

There are several loose ends in the literature that leave the discussion open for further development before coming to any conclusions about surrender being conscious or unconscious. It can be fairly stated that the majority of humankind currently functions within levels of consciousness that are dominated by unconscious Egoic influences (Hawkins, 2002; Wilber, 1996, 2000, 2001). At these levels, the majority of us are likely to experience surrender initially as a result of crisis moments. It is also true that current literature on surrender offers limited substance regarding its potential role in human development beyond states of normality.

Whether conscious or unconscious, it is important to realize that surrendering does not reduce us to being robotic. Remember that surrender is vibrant, not passive. Surrender is the utmost exercise of our reason (Wolff, 1974) for which we must be held responsible.

### *Responsibility*

Surrender is a state that is positive, creative, and acknowledges one's responsibilities (Tiebout, 1949). Because we equate surrender to being submissive, we also assume that it turns us into puppets. We fear that it will make us pushovers and passive participants (Tiebout, 1953). When an act of surrender results in passivity, it is a surrender that has been sabotaged by rigid beliefs, sustaining an interest in judgment and control (May, 1982; Wolff, 1974). We generally recognize our need to be responsible and yet do not always know *how* to act responsibly (May, 1982).

Western society provides a great deal of liberty that empowers our right to choose and enforce our free will, but liberties do not necessarily mean that we choose wisely. Sufficient external liberties are crucial for healthy living, but it is inner freedom and personal responsibility that is the axis of personal growth (Hart, 2000). Liberties are flanked by responsibilities (Frankl, 1946/1984), and freedom requires the responsible development of self. To avoid such responsibility creates apathy and serves to stagnate the development of people and society (Hart, 2000).

It is possible to survive by avoiding responsibility, but it is a life based on mindless habits and impulses (May, 1991). Surrender *does* release one from the sense of *supreme* control, but it does *not* abdicate one of responsibility (Masters, 2000). To have a life filled with meaning and creatively realize one's potential, one must responsibly put habits-of-mind to the test and experiment with perceived truths (Hart, 2000; May, 1991). Only through surrender to examination do we give substance to our beliefs: either confirming them or modifying them appropriately (May, 1988; Wolff, 1974). When we test our beliefs, we become familiar with our allegiance to our Ego and our allegiance to more spiritual guidance (Cohen, 2000).

Our job is threefold: to be responsible to notice opportunities for surrender; to responsibly engage them; and then to be continually responsible about our involvement in the state of surrender. Often, we miss opportunities for surrender because of the chaos of society, the clutter of our thoughts, and our attachment to our own self-importance (May, 1982). Even if we do notice opportunities to surrender *and* actively engage them, we must remain responsible *in* the state of surrender. The risk is to otherwise abdicate our responsibilities to another or become blindly obedient to another, both of which negate our continued significance.

Surrender does not mean to live mindlessly (May, 1982). In surrender, one sees clearly and acknowledges a purposeful role within which one is responsible to act (Tolle, 1999) while simultaneously not trying to control the situation for expected outcomes (Rutledge, 2004).

Responsibility is the price for freedom and choice (Cohen, 2000; Frankl, 1946/1984). Irresponsibility is a choice, but it is a choice of convenience and avoidance. Convenience indulges the Ego's desires for immediate gratification and does not develop the moral side of character. Avoidance sustains a habits-of-mind lifestyle that functions on impulse rather than heartfelt passion and meaning (May, 1991). Such a life risks being dominated and controlled by others. Ironically, this risks losing the very control that the Ego connives to maintain.

The average person does not accept their responsibility to proactively pursue their own development (Hawkins, 2002), and our current level of collective consciousness has a particularly difficult ceiling through which to evolve (Wilber, 1996, 2001). Only through responsible choice can we consciously cultivate and nourish the needs of our souls and release the wants of our Ego (Zukav, 1990) to realize our potential, and ideally to optimize it.

We have a civic responsibility to surrender to the examination of beliefs and the process of personal development. The overemphasis on individuality in the West may cloud our recognition of the communal responsibilities that come with our freedoms. Please understand that I am not waving any political banners here; quite the contrary.

Surrender is a responsible choice in personal development and collective well-being. Acting responsibly requires consideration of more than oneself. Since consideration of others conflicts with narcissistic Egoic tendencies, I calculate that this is a good time to address Egoic interests for the benefits of surrendering.

#### *Benefits and Outcomes of Surrender*

The act of surrender is followed by a state of surrender which has recognizable qualities initiated by, and consequential of, the act of surrender (Tiebout, 1949). The qualities that are recognizable in the state of surrender are mutually ascribable to the act of surrender.

Please note that several citations in this section are of Levitt et al. (2004). Their work focuses on insight theory which is highly duplicative of transformation theory, only grounded in psychological research rather than educational theory. Because the outcomes of transformation or insight experiences cannot be gained without the act of surrender, and because surrender is the instigator of the state of surrender where insight occurs, I apply the findings of Levitt et al. Likewise, Tiebout himself (1949) describes a post-surrender state of mind that he terms *insight*, or the a-ha experience, which aligns with Levitt et al.'s work. Further, since there is redundancy between Levitt et al.'s claims and the other authors cited herein, it seems right to cite their findings as also indicative of surrender. Finally, even if Levitt et al.'s citations are eliminated from this section, there are sufficient claims made about the benefits of surrender by the remaining authors cited to highlight the value of surrender. So, I leave it to the discretion of the reader to include or disregard the benefits mentioned here that are ascribed to Levitt et al. As the author, I feel strongly about their inclusion.

There appear to be categories into which the various benefits of surrender can be placed. They are: sense of self; character traits; perceptions; impetus; and affect on others.

#### *Sense of Self*

Surrender results in an increased sense of self-esteem (Jones, 1994), self-acceptance, and self-reliance (Levitt et al., 2004). One collectively feels a sense of happiness, inner peace, relief, and positive feelings (Jones, 1974; Levitt et al., 2004; McDonald, 2003; Tiebout, 1949; Tolle, 1999), although initially one can experience heightened anxiety depending on the extremes of the

experience (Hidas, 1981; Levitt et.al, 2004; Tolle, 1999; Wallace, 2001). There is a reduced sense of antagonization (Tiebout, 1949). There is an ironic sense of greater control even in the face of Ego reduction, a pride for having engaged and persevered the process, and the ability to more authentically express one's self (Levitt et al., 2004). There is also an enhanced capacity for basic trust in others (Branscomb, 1993).

#### *Character Traits*

There is an array of increase in character traits that result from surrender: traits that are deemed admirable on a global basis (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2002). Surrender increases one's humility (Jones, 1994; Tiebout, 1954), receptivity (Tiebout 1949, 1954), wisdom (McDonald, 2003; Tiebout, 1949), patience (Tiebout, 1954), and tolerance (Levitt, 1999; McDonald, 2003; Tiebout, 1954). Surrender and the experiences of insight and wisdom development are also associated with increases in compassion, flexibility, adaptability, and gratitude, along with a reduction in jealous traits (Levitt, 1999; Levitt et al., 2004).

#### *Perceptions*

Overall, there is a shift in how one views the world, which then affects how one engages life. Surrender cultivates intimacy and relatedness with others (Branscomb, 1993; Masters, 2000; Tiebout, 1949), moving people toward unity with other (Hidas, 1981) while enhancing healthy autonomy (Levitt et al., 2004). There is a greater acceptance of what *is* as opposed to what one might prefer things to be (Tolle, 1999), and an overall heightened awareness and sensitivity to life's nuances (May, 2004). One begins to see that their perceptions can stand distinct from potentially greater truths (Jones, 1994; Wolff, 1974), and information is simply processed more inclusively (Branscomb, 1993). There is a basic perception of openness rather than the tendency to see boundaries (May, 2004; Tiebout, 1949, 1954), and a greater sense of security (Levitt et al., 2004). There is also an increased sense of fulfillment and meaning in life (Jones, 1994), which aligns with the reflective outcomes of states of *flow* in which one is flooded with gratitude (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

#### *Impetus*

Surrender takes place in the present moment, but with a direction of discovery: discovery of one's whole self and better understanding of one's unity with others (Ghent, 1990). This is consistent with the universal longing to know and be known.

Once the act and state of surrender is experienced, there is an inclination to repeat it (Wolff, 1974). As already mentioned, subsequent surrenders become comparatively easier due not only to their familiarity, but also because the Ego has become more manageable in the process (Wallace, 2001). Those who have persevered experiences of insight are inclined to formulate methods for innovative application of the process across life contexts (Levitt et al., 2004). This supports one of my main goals and theses: that, with familiarity and assistance, the surrender process can become less threatening and more inviting as a tool in proactive personal development.

#### *Affect on Others*

While there are numerous benefits to the individual who surrenders, these benefits translate into improved interpersonal relationships. In addition to cultivating a move toward unity, Tolle (1999) points out that the energy of surrender also shifts others' behavior. Others respond to unifying behavior by being reciprocally resilient, rather than sustaining a resistant posture.

While there are many benefits and outcomes to surrender and the process of personal development, it should not be inferred that fear and resistance do not recur. They are part of the

human experience. Surrender allows for possibilities, not certainties (Branscomb, 1993). The flip side is that avoidance of surrender tends to contain the self, support developmental arrest, and allow oneself to be irresponsibly vulnerable to circumstances (May, 1988). What surrender offers is a tool and method by which one can better manage fear and strategically quell resistant tendencies in order to allow for growth to occur.

Knowing the benefits and outcomes of surrender help to value its worth and potentially supply motivational influences to enact surrender. While motivation provides the *why* of surrender, it helps to better know *how* to surrender: to know the keys that assist in effecting it.

#### *Keys That Enable Surrender*

Surrender is an act founded on something deeper than the intellect and yet influenced by the intellect. One can provide facilitating conditions for surrender, but they cannot *make* surrender happen; there is a combination of intangibles and tangibles that intersect to effect such a transitional experience (Ghent, 1990).

The identified keys for surrender address both internal (subjective) and external (objective) matters. There is not a magic formula to enable surrender, for the variables are many and they each have their own spectrums of strength and influence. Some, all, or none of these keys may need to be in place for surrender to occur.

That being said, there is one key that has paramount mention in the literature: trust. Whether it is trust in self, in other, in a higher power, or in something else, trust is consistently mentioned as key to surrender, although some authors mention it more often than others (Atwood et al., 2002; Branscomb, 1993; Ghent, 1990; Hidas, 1981; LaMothe, 2005; Levitt et al., 2006; Mackura, 2004; May, 1991, 2004; Tiebout, 1949, 1954). I discuss trust more thoroughly in the next section but, generally speaking, we need to find someone or something in which to trust, or multiples of trust in self and in other than self, in order to enable surrender and its consequential repair and/or growth (Ghent, 1990; LaMothe, 2005; Mackura, 2004). Here, I address the internal [trust in self] and external [trust in other than self] keys that enable surrender, keeping in mind that trust is the core key.

#### *Internal*

There are many internal keys that enable surrender. Some appear to be pathology specific. For instance, in psychotherapy, it is key to suspend judgment about one's self (Branscomb, 1993). The role of judgment is somewhat imparted to the therapist (Branscomb, 1993), but I interpret this to be in the form of a *place-holder* for the role, not that the client actually wants the therapist to be judgmental. In fact, part of the client-therapist trust is based on the therapist being impartial (Levitt et al., 2006).

Another specific key exists with alcoholic and addictive behaviors, where such individuals often need a key experience of hitting bottom to trigger the surrender that appeals for help and accepts their addictions, after which successive surrenders can take place (Jones, 1994; Tiebout, 1949). Another key that has strong consensus in the treating of alcoholism is having an internal acceptance of a higher power in which one trusts and to which one surrenders their will, often called a conversion experience (Finlay, 2000; Jones, 1994; Tiebout, 1949, 1953, 1954).

In any type of therapy, whether for clinical pathologies or addictive behaviors, it is key that all clients have a personal commitment to the therapeutic process, which will include various types of surrender (Jones, 1994; Levitt et al., 2006). It seems safe to say that any endeavor toward personal change requires commitment.

The following keys are more general in nature, but still arise from pathology-focused literature. I invite the reader to remain alert to how these general keys can assist proactive development past normality. Consider the following.

Several of the keys are actually character traits - as identified in the field of positive psychology - and character traits can be developed (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These traits include: courage (Branscomb, 1993; Jones, 1994; Lucas, 1994; Mackura, 2004), honesty (Jones, 1994); and compassion (Levitt, 1999; May, 1991). Another key trait is hope (Branscomb, 1993; LaMothe, 2005), which supports the key of having a progressive attitude (Mackura, 2004). This compliments the key to seize, rather than avoid, one's motivational desire to better know one's self and the world (Levitt et al., 2004). Such motivation helps one to engage and go through the process of surrender, rather than oppose or ignore it. Confidence is an additional key (Rutledge, 2004) that provides blanket support to the other keys.

By considering the psychological state of *flow*, other keys for surrender can be illuminated. Flow is a psychological state that involves total psychic engagement with no awareness of space or time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997), similar to the state of surrender. A key to obtaining flow is the perception of a balance between personal skill and situational challenge. Therefore, a key to enabling surrender is a match between our perceived sense of skill in the challenge with Other. This also helps to explain the tendency to avoid surrender and transformational development: that the sense of challenge or disorientation with Other overwhelms our perceived skill, creating the existential dread that thwarts transformation. Gross overwhelm would seem to equate to trauma. This promotes the value of proactive surrender; it allows for provocative challenge and incremental development.

Still another key is that of acceptance: acceptance of what *is*, as opposed to what one might prefer (Jones, 1994; Tolle, 1999). This is key because surrender takes place in the present moment without any focus on the past or the future (Ghent, 1990). I want to clarify that having no focus on the future is not inconsistent with having the key of a progressive attitude. Moving toward something can take place in the present moment without necessarily focusing on the future. Some of these distinctions can get very subtle and potentially appear in contradiction of one another. They are not; they are refining the understanding of the subtleties of surrender.

A final internal key has to do with expectations. It is key to have no agenda when engaging the act of surrender (Mackura, 2004; Masters, 2000). Having an agenda is weighted with expectations and compels judgmental responses. Surrender is both enabled and sustained when one does not know or anticipate what might happen.

#### *External*

In addition to the internal keys that enable surrender, there are many external keys that are valuable to have in place. Some are in reference to a person or a thing, and some have to do with the place or the environment, but both have to do with a sense of protection (Atwood et al., 2002; Branscomb, 1993; Levitt et al., 2006).

The indirect object of surrender is irrelevant compared to the process, however, one does need to find someone or some thing in which to trust that does not impinge on one's Ego (Ghent, 1990). In psychotherapy, the therapist is central to surrender (Hidas, 1981) and functions in the roles of protector, witness, spokesperson, and care-giver.

Before a client will trust a therapist and allow them to function in these roles, the therapist must first display that they care, exhibited by appearing genuine, showing respect, and demonstrating expertise in the therapeutic process (Levitt et al., 2006). This minimizes the perceived risk for the clients and enables their trust.

Once the primary key of trust is gained, the functional roles of the therapist can come into play and additionally support the surrender process. As a protector, the therapist provides physical boundaries via their office space as well as time boundaries via scheduled appointments, both of which ensure predictability and availability for the client (Branscomb, 1993). As a witness, the therapist provides a sense of community versus isolation and an intersubjective context (Atwood et al., 2002; Branscomb, 1993). As a spokesperson, the therapist can provide judgment of circumstances while avoiding judgment of the client, and provide validation of the client's story (Atwood et al., 2002; Branscomb, 1993). As a caregiver, the therapist both nurtures and limits, providing the necessary emotional hold while providing structure in which to let go – to surrender – and allow the client to experiment with their own development (Branscomb, 1993; LaMothe, 2005; Levitt et al., 2006). As the client becomes more self-reliant, the role of the therapist decreases; the therapist acts as a type of surrogate for others' approval until the client has a strong enough sense of self to be more demonstrative on their own (Levitt et al., 2006). At such a point, the client may have the required strength and health of ego versus Ego to tolerate the anxieties that come with change (Levitt et al., 2004).

Beyond the therapist, the environment is key and should provide a sense of protection. There should be a field of mutuality that ideally provides a sense of safety, physical comfort, psychological comfort that opens space for self and other, mutual respect for those engaged, and an invitation to relax (Atwood et al., 2002; LaMothe, 2005; Levitt et al., 2006). This can occur in combinations of physical comfort by way of furniture, lighting, colors, and general attention to environmental psychological issues (Bechtel & Churchman, 2002; Levitt et al., 2006; Mahnke, 1996). It can also occur by way of rituals (Halifax, 1999; Houston, 1985), which can be highly structured or very simple, such as merely verbalizing the awareness that there is an occasion of engagement. Rituals can provide a dignity and respect in formalizing the act of surrender. The details and degree of attention to environment is highly malleable depending on individual needs and circumstantial issues.

These keys do not *all* have to be in place for surrender to occur, although it would appear to be ideal if they were. The literature suggests that more keys are necessary to be in place when the psychological state of the person involved is more vulnerable. As one experiments with surrender experiences and reduces the influence of the Ego, less keys need to be in place to continue successive surrender efforts.

At this point, it is valuable to point out the parallel nature of the therapeutic process and the transformational process. In both cases there is disorientation and an opportunity for surrender. In psychotherapy the therapist is pivotal, whereas in proactive personal development other people or things may serve as indirect objects for surrender, but in both cases the individual is assisted by trust, a sense of protection, and a type of inter-subjective context. Notably, the stage at which a therapy client experiments with their own development – having engaged the process of surrender in the therapeutic relationship – parallels phases five through eight in the transformational process which include: exploration of new roles and actions, planning for action, developing skills for the new roles, and the provisional trying on of the new roles. Because of the strength of these parallels, among other considerations, I see the strength of the role of surrender not only in therapeutic processes but in human development processes across the board. And so, I reiterate that, while most of the literature on surrender hails from the pathology side of psychology, it merits inclusion on the normative side of human development and especially in optimizing human potential and collective well-being.



We've seen the benefits of surrender, and its role in personal development has been established. By far, the number one key to surrender has been identified as trust. The next most obvious question is trust in *what*.

### *Trust*

Trust is a firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing; it is confident belief; it is faith (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language). Whether one places trust in a person, a thing, or a belief, there is the element of faith, and faith does not rest on logical proof or material evidence.

Whether one is spiritually inclined or not, there is an element of faith that everyone experiences in their humanness. Faith shows up most notably in the lived experience of love for another (May, 1982). Love does not rest on logic. Love is a faithful expression of our need and longing to know and be known.

Trust and faith abide at the deepest levels of our lives and contribute to our functional foundation (Hidas, 1981; May, 1982). Whereas trust tends to be conditioned on lived experiences, faith is more unconditioned and may look at experiences of trust in making choices (May, 1988). Trust and faith mutually support one another.

If one accepts that faith exists, it is easier to discuss the role of trust in the act of surrender. If one cannot grasp the notion of faith, then the more tangible aspects of trust, such as past experiences, provide the intellectual substance upon which to ground an act of surrender. Unfortunately, past experiences may contradict the capacity to trust and negatively influence the capacity to surrender. This is where faith can play a supportive role in the placement of trust. Either way, trust relies on a person, thing or belief, and *both* trust and faith rely on releasing one's sense of absolute control.

Do not confuse trust with indulgence; one cannot surrender to everyone or everything because some surrenders are potentially destructive (Masters, 2000; May, 1982). While surrender consists of stepping into the unknown, it cannot be blind. Wise surrender sees clearly without having to understand; it sees with all of one's faculties without believing that one is master over the situation. Trust and faith allow one to accept the limits of one's control while still being responsible about the wise exercise of surrender.

There are several criteria to test the legitimacy and safety for an act of surrender. They include (May, 1982): being conscious of the event; being intentional about choosing to surrender; being willing to accept responsibility for the act of surrender; being willing to accept responsibility for the consequences of surrender; being fully committed to the mystery of the act, not committed toward an object; and being fully committed to the engagement of understanding, not committed to an escape or avoidance of something. May suggests that, if surrender meets these criteria, the likelihood of it being destructive is minimal.

That the *likelihood* of surrender being destructive is minimized reminds us that there is still risk involved. Trust and faith will always involve risk (May, 1988). There are no guarantees in surrender, but it is safe to say that there are no guarantees in life, period. Trust and faith play a role in the entire human experience, well beyond their role in surrender. In its worst case scenario, trust is the belief that surrender does not annihilate one's sense of self. In its best case, trust enables a sublime experience that results in all of the benefits described earlier.

Once trust is understood as part of human experience, there can be less angst and more curiosity about looking at the unknown into which we surrender. Trust provides a freedom to be comfortable with not knowing. Trust makes the unknown a little less threatening, while not necessarily less mysterious. What is the unknown into which we surrender?

### *The Unknown*

Much of surrender and the entire human experience is bound simultaneously by simplicity *and* complexity. The unknown can be simply considered the unknown: a mystery. We are biologically hardwired to seek meaning (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002), and the unknown therefore provides an opportunity to find the meaning we are biologically disposed to seek.

At the same time, it is important to look at complexity of the unknown, within which exists irony and paradox. Being in the unknown is an ironic dance between letting go and yet not being passive; of being detached from outcomes and yet remaining responsibly aware to discern new meanings (May, 1991). The unknown is not sinister; it is a place where greater truths are hidden that can become known (May, 2004). It is our Ego's concerns that make the unknown a fearful place.

The unknown helps to liberate us from attachments and expectations (May, 2004). In the unknown, we give of ourselves and engage an opportunity to receive. It is in the giving that we *can* receive, but it is important to not *expect* to receive something; we can only *allow* for receipt of that which emerges (May, 1982, 1991; Wallace, 2001; Wolff, 1974). If we *expect* something, we seek to *get* something, and getting is different than receiving. Getting is a method of obtaining something with calculated forethought, and having such an agenda is inconsistent with authentic surrender. Receiving, on the other hand, is being open to accept what might be offered.

The act of surrender enables an *opportunity* to catch something (Wolff, 1974). In the unknown of surrender, there is transitional flow between stretching and yielding. In stretching, one leans in toward something without having to grasp it. In the stretching one yields to receive without having to hold; one stretches the mind without having to comprehend (May, 1991). Stretching and yielding permit flexibility and avoids the concreteness of Egoic certainties.

The unknown is a place of grace and fluidity that respects individuality while appreciating unity and similarity. It is a place where the concreteness of Egoic certainties gives way to flexibility, allowing one to find meaning in the mystery; where something of self and Other becomes known. There is an acceptance. Acceptance has to do with understanding the present moment.

### *The Present Moment*

Full attention to what *is* creates a gap in the past-future continuum (Tolle, 1999). Our Egos tend to function with a great awareness of the past, such as when we ruminate or have regrets and judge events and outcomes. The Ego also focuses on the future, when we worry and overly plan and create expectations. The present moment can have no regrets or agenda because it continually unfolds *in the moment*. It is neither past nor future; it is fully *present*. Surrender takes place *in* the present moment (Ghent, 1990).

In the present moment of surrender, the resistance of the unconscious becomes conscious and released (Tolle, 1999). Defiance, grandiosity, attachments, and compulsions cease; great stillness, peace, openness, and awareness arise (Tiebout, 1949; Tolle, 1999). There is a spacelessness and a stillness, and yet there is aliveness and interest in the wonders that surround oneself (Tiebout, 1954). Just like the state of flow, there is total psychic engagement with no awareness of space or time. This state is obtainable because of the flexibility of human consciousness. Just as flow lacks a sense of control and thrives with a sense of meaning and purpose (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997), so too does surrender; and it occurs in the present moment. One is willingly moved without being dominated; one does not lose freedom but rather *is* free; one is in a state that is generative (LaMothe, 2005). In the essence of the present moment is the vastness of possibilities for meaning and greater truths.

The simultaneity of simplicity and complexity in the present moment and in the state of surrender, burdens the intellect with irony and paradox. The Ego and the mind struggle with paradox, and yet it is quintessential to the human experience. What is this riddle called paradox?

### *Paradox*

Surrender *is* a paradoxical phenomenon (Wallace, 2001), and so is the process of transformation and the bulk of human experience (Ferendo, 2005; Viorst, 1998).

Paradox exhibits the inexplicable, and this is difficult to embrace in Western culture because it goes against our preferential grain of logic and reason. We experience a contradiction and yet discern truth within it. In the act and state of surrender, there is a balance point between being in control and letting go; a paradox of being voluntary *and* involuntary (Rutledge, 2004). An outcome of surrender is becoming more open and trusting while gaining wisdom: the paradox of becoming younger (more childlike in curiosity) and older (wiser) at the same time (Branscomb, 1993). The Ego seeks to sustain control and yet, in the process of surrender – the very act it fights against – it gains more control (Jones, 1994; May, 1982).

Paradox is evidenced when we act in contradiction to the very behavior that we believe will produce preferable outcomes (Leary, 2004). We reason one way but act in another. By acknowledging and accepting the paradox of our ways, we can help to avoid deducing inaccurate conclusions about ourselves and others (Leary, 2004), and open the gateway for surrender and personal growth. In surrender, we release the burden of our inadequate *perceived* control and gain proficiency over that which we *can* control.

Notice that paradox can only exist when there are expectations. Without expectations, occurrences simply are what they are, not judged against an expectation or a standard. *This* is the challenge for the Ego: quelling its certainties and managing its inclination to control and judge via expectations. Surrender accepts what *is*.

Certainly there are times when we need to function with a degree of expectation in life, but in the role of personal development and the process of surrender and transformation, there is also a need for *no* expectations. The narcissistic tendencies of the Ego have inclined it to minister to selfish influences, neglecting moral influences. The paradox of human behavior and the Ego's resistance to surrender can be better seen in the comparison of dualities and the influence of polarities.

### *Ego and Polarities*

The more influence the Ego has on personal choices, the more that intellectual methods are used to enable surrender. Such intellectualized negotiations with the Ego *tend* to arise in times of crisis or duress. I suggest that we can assist negotiations with the Ego to comfortably invite the recognition of its limits, find a place for trust, and thereby enable proactive surrender.

I want to remind the reader that the discussion about the Ego within this article is relative to the Ego as described in the beginning: the narcissistic influencer that drives behavior based on prideful, selfish, judgmental, and fearful motives. In no way does this attempt to devalue the entire realm of discussion about the ego that exists in psychoanalytic and human developmental literature. The focus of this article is on surrender, for which discussion of the Ego is supportive.

I am contextualizing the neutral ego and the charged Ego within the broader discussion of surrender and proactive personal development. My goal is to orient the reader's attention on surrender and the Ego's hesitations borne by polarities. To assist in this goal, I offer a visual method of providing relative position for the ego and Ego in relationship to polarities, dualities, and surrender behavior. This helps to better understand the dual nature of human experience and the function of the Ego in its polarized relationship to Other.

Dualities are a condition of being twofold (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language). They are neutral and simply name the twofold nature of something. Depending on your spiritual inclinations, one can understand the twofold nature of human life as either, mind and matter, or as spirit and body. The twofold nature is the design of a greater whole which can be visualized as a spectrum, book-ended by the dual items. This is represented shortly.

Polarities, on the other hand, are not neutral. Polarities are a manifestation of opposing attributes (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language). It is the oppositional quality of polarities that gives them a charge, rather than being neutral as are dualities. With regard to the ego and human function, polarities can occur when the spectrum of dualities is severed by the Ego. This severance positions the dualities in opposition to one another rather than distinguished points on a continuum, and the positions become charged with judgment: one side is good, the other is bad. This tendency is not of the ego, but of the Ego and is exacerbated by Western culture's promotion of individuality, materialism, and ego-strengthening approaches to psychology (Easterbrook, 2003; May, 1982; Myers, 2001; Schwartz, 2004).

Shown here are many of the dualities mentioned or alluded to in this article and presented as spectrums.

Individuality	-----	Community
Unconscious	-----	Conscious
Self	-----	Other
Known	-----	Unknown
Fear	-----	Curiosity
Certainties	-----	Possibilities
Past-Future	-----	Present
Suspicion	-----	Compassion
Resistance	-----	Resilience
Boundaries	-----	Freedom
Defined	-----	Creative
Linear	-----	Holistic
Black-and-White	-----	Shades-of-Gray
Protected	-----	Vulnerable
Rigid	-----	Flexible
Control	-----	Letting-go

From this display, it is easier to see the duality of things. There is the individual *and* the community. There is the unconscious *and* the conscious. There is the self *and* other, or Other. There is the known *and* the unknown, and so on. Dualities exist and are neutral. When the ego is functioning, it attempts to balance the needs of the individual *with* the moral needs for the community, and so on. The ego is the mechanism that aims for healthy function of the twofold nature of dualities.

The Ego, on the other hand, has morphed from being the neutral balancer - the ego - into a narcissistic influence that weights its impact toward the left side of these dualities. The left side is not bad. It's just that the Ego, from its relative *position* on the left side, sees itself as correct and consequently views the other side of the duality in oppositional terms, creating a polarity. Therefore, the Ego views those items on the right side of the spectrum in more negative terms. As such, the Ego constantly tries to enforce that which sustains the left side.

Again, I need to clarify that I am not making a political statement. These dualities and polarities are not *right* and *left* with regard to political ideologies. The list above could swap

sides and be every bit as indicative of the point that is being made here. What is important is that there is a theme to the function of the Ego; it severs dualities into polarized opponents and then acts to sustain those which indulge narcissistic preferences.

### *Ego and Psychology*

Basically, the Ego represents our sense of identity. Without a self or an identity, we can not purposefully control our behavior nor have the capacity to imagine ourselves in someone else's place, both of which are hallmarks of our human experiences and the basis of our social and cultural establishments (Leary, 2004). We are particularly prone in the West to work with earnestness to distinguish our sense of self. This whole process of identity formation can be the beginning of polarities: that which I keep as my identity is good, and that which I reject is bad.

At the infant stages of identity formation, self is used more as a means of distinction (Papalia et al., 2004) rather than judgment, but as we age and become acculturated and socialized, our identity becomes fused with internalized beliefs and solidifies into a self defined by judgmental boundaries. Since we have worked so hard to establish our sense of self, our instinct for preservation and control – which is a lower-order, primary brain function that can override higher order mental functioning - tends to make us reactionary when we feel that our identity boundaries are being threatened (Phillips, 1995; Robertson, 2000; Wilber, 1996). Survival mentality operates when we feel challenged and is based on the emotions of fear and anger, which distances us from our higher order mental capacities that are so necessary for healthy functioning in today's society (Phillips, 1995; Viamontes, Beitman, Viamontes, & Viamontes, 2004). This self-preservation mode that distinguishes self from Other can be represented as:

Self=Good----- Other=Bad

Depth psychology suggests that the ego is developed and fortified by resistance and identity with position (LaMothe, 2005), but too much fortification produces an Ego that masquerades its weaknesses and fears as strength and certainty (Tolle, 1999). The ego needs to be strengthened to the point of efficiency in its role as mediator between dualities – between personal desires and communal needs – but it must not be puffed up into believing that it has supreme control. Its role in human behavior and development is contributory, not absolute.

When the Ego attempts to function in absolute control, it sabotages any movement toward growth and freedom (May, 2004) and it continually puts up an array of obstacles which must be overcome in order to realize its more humble position (Grant, 1996) and allow for development of one's greater potentials. Ego can become so consumed by selfish tendencies that it becomes enslaved to the patterns of habit it creates. In exaggerated form, this shows up as the choiceless compulsions of addictive behaviors that turn objects into idols and creates biological dependencies that complicate one's control over behavior (May, 2004).

Therapists attempt to reduce the Ego's narcissistic influences from sovereign status to more modest roles (Tiebout, 1954). The irony is that the Ego seeks to preserve an illusion; it is an identity, not a thing (Hawkins, 2002). In the rapid change of today's culture and society, we reestablish our identity often (Leary, 2004). Because our identity changes, so does Other (Kearney, 2003) and so the polarities that we establish are fleeting, yet we function as if they are permanent.

The Ego avoids anything that contradicts its self image; it is thoroughly invested in its fears and desires and is a very anti-evolutionary force (Cohen, n.d.). We are collectively – on a global scale, not just in the West - advancing in our scientific and technological capacities at a rate that is potentially faster than the human psyche can manage. The rate is also faster than

biological evolution can accommodate to rapidly provide any advanced needs for neurological capacity. As such, it is our responsibility to consciously and proactively build up and employ our current higher order mental capacities and quell the influence of the Ego which may childishly and unwisely use the scientific and technological advancements that we ourselves create (Beitman, Nair, & Viamontes, 2004; Elgin, 1993; Wilber, 1996, 2001). We are making things that we do not have the depth of character to use wisely.

As we barricade ourselves against Other and seek to be *positioned* in a world that asks us daily to shift with the changes that occur, reason is no longer sufficient as a sole guide for us. Reason falters, fantasies flourish, and Other excites our primal fears (Kearney, 2003; Phillips, 1995). Ironically, this state of stress and primal responses is a net effect of resisting conditions: conditions that have no power other than that which we impart via labels and judgments (Hawkins, 2002).

Surrender can occur when the Ego accepts its limits and manages its willfulness.

#### *Willfulness and Willingness*

In the West, we objectify Other as being not-me (Gozawa, 2005) and have crafted an argumentative culture. Our insistence on reason and logic as distinguishers of truth has festered polarities. We think in terms of *sides*. Our justice system is designed for war between litigating sides; our educational system promotes intellectual debate versus understanding and agreement; our political system is founded on oppositional houses (Tannen, 1998). Many of our most guarded personal beliefs result from these cultural paradigms and often occur without our being aware of them (Mezirow, 2000) because external stimuli trigger internal mechanics that are not open to inspection (Leary, 2004). The subliminal influence of culturally induced polarized thinking, combined with our default survival mentality that limits the use of our higher order mental capacities, reduces our capacity to understand and to be sensitive to Others. Our psyche becomes fractured (Kearney, 2003), creating and sustaining polarities.

Please know that I am not bashing Western culture. These points are indicators of the current state of cultural and societal evolution in the West, and to a certain degree globally. I offer the cultural perspective to appreciate the broader influences on the Ego and the reciprocal influence we have on the evolution of the culture in which Ego functions. Also, I speak from a Western perspective and admit my own predispositions. I am a Westerner speaking to a Western audience.

And so, polarities excite us to hold tightly to our will. Willfulness *and* willingness refer to one's underlying attitude toward the wonder of life itself (May, 1982), and the Ego is more willful than it is willing.

Willfulness *can* be a testimony and expression of our dedication to a sense of perseverance and insistence toward reaching a goal, but we can overdo it and lose track of its role in overall healthy functioning (May, 1991). Extreme willfulness can be the dysfunctional use of agency that severely distinguishes self as separate from Other (Hart, 2000). Willfulness is intentional, attempts to control existence, says *no* to the mysteries of life or at best says *yes-but*, and can appear disguised as willingness that is motivated by subversive intentions (Hart, 2000; May, 1982).

Willingness, on the other hand, consists of allowing. It surrenders and says *yes* to belonging in community and being receptive (Hart, 2000). Willingness: realizes ones part in a greater whole; enters and immerses oneself into the mysteries of Other; is reverent about the wonders of life; is a form of surrender that can sometimes seem assertive or even aggressive; and is necessary if one wishes to develop and grow (Hawkins, 2002; May, 1982).

Surrender, transformation, and growth are processes that dance with and between control and flow. At one instant, one may be willful and working toward a goal, at another instant one may be willing to surrender in order to deeply commune with the moment (Hart, 2000). The energy for growth is activated by this dynamic interplay (Hart, 2000).

As a duality, willfulness and willingness look like this:

Willfulness ----- Willingness

Willfulness is our most frequent block to surrender (May, 1982). Willingness is a form of surrender and opens up one's range of choices and opens the mind to appraise the validity of new hypotheses and potential truths (Hawkins, 2002; May, 1982). Willingness brings into focus those things that the Ego filters out or defines out of existence. Surrender is a paradoxical willfulness to be willing. Willingness opens one up to greater truths, but what is truth?

#### *Certainties and Truths*

Ego's willfulness fights against letting go of perceived certainties to allow any room for possibilities. It resists the unknown and remains fearful of it. The great tragedy is how easily the human psyche is deceived (Hawkins, 2002). Any truth that is founded on reason is only a contingent truth. Reason is funded by external proofs or approval, which themselves are based on assumptions and qualifiers (Fernandez-Armesto, 1997). Since assumptions can not be verified, reason yields only contingent truths (Fernandez-Armesto, 1997), but the Ego refuses to acknowledge this.

The truths we currently hold are merely a result of modified past truths that no longer functioned consistently. Ultimate truth lies past our feelings and past our logic where conviction dies and uncertainty is accepted (Fernandez-Armesto, 1997). We have the capability to distinguish faulty truths and to bear problems in mind in order to reveal their secrets, but we don't necessarily possess the will or stamina to hold them long enough for the revelations (Wilber, 2001). Our Ego wants immediate gratification (Easterbrook, 2003; Myers, 2001).

While we are beings whose knowledge is contrived by processes of understanding and interpretation (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998), the Ego limits the range of information allowed into its process. We are creatures of habit and come to know most new things by pattern-recognition: by comparing something new to a concept with which we are already familiar (Hawkins, 2002). We respond habitually, not with fresh curiosity. What needs to transform is our automatic response of judgment and certainty (Gozawa, 2005). The Ego usurps the longing to know and be known and filters out the desire for greater truths (Cohen, 2000).

Logic and reason afford one realm of truth. It is not until their rigid truths become consistently questionable that they *may* be opened for reformation. Such a path of development tends to be triggered by crisis. It is no surprise that such methods of development are avoided. An alternative route is that of proactive surrender.

#### *Surrender and the Ego*

Surrender provides a willing path toward greater understandings. Surrender allows for flexibility and movement in relation to a polarized Other and is a voluntary choice to not resist. Such a choice is as much a part of ego development as choosing *to* resist (LaMothe, 2005). The wise use of our will can get us to the edge of the Ego and beyond; we can will ourselves into the act of surrender that carries us into the flow of possibilities and growth (Hart, 2000).

We *think* we live by virtues and influences that we can control, but we are governed by more than ourselves (Hawkins, 2002). World religions teach that the Ego interferes with detection of truth and cannot engage the bigger, systemic view of things (Leary, 2004). Central to personal development is the management of the Ego and surrendering to a more universal

identity (Hidas, 1981). In lieu of more culturally sanctioned spiritual practices in the West, our need for universal identity and spiritual sustenance comes by way of therapy (Some', 1999), but Western therapy focuses heavily on ego strengthening and can inadvertently build up the Ego's narcissistic muscles.

Recovery from any dysfunction as well as growth from places of normality is dependent on the willingness to explore new ways of looking at things: to endure inner fears when belief systems are shaken (Hawkins, 2002). By quieting the Ego, we can soften its rigid influence and help to strengthen the health of the ego and assist the act of surrender (Hidas, 1981; Leary, 2004). It is an act of ego strength void of Ego fixation (Hart, 2000). Surrender is the exercise of moral muscles. In surrender, the Ego may feel like it is dying, but the ego is sustained. In the initial efforts to exercise moral muscles, the Ego will feel torn, but it is through that wound – a sacred wound - that new ways of understanding arrive (Branscomb, 1991).

We are complex systems. Systems are made up of systems and exist within ever larger systems within which paradox is characteristic and can be understood (Laszlo, 1996; Morin, 1999; Rowland, 1999). As long as the Ego functions with its narrow view, the paradox of human behavior can not be sufficiently contextualized and it causes frustration. Curiously enough, motives to embrace change arise when the mind is challenged and puzzles are perceived (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Hawkins, 2002), and paradoxes are puzzles. The very fears and obstacles that we perceive and resist ironically point us in the very direction of our own growth and serve as portals for surrender (Hart, 2000). Each surrender exposes us to a part of the larger systems within which we function. Through surrender, the Ego can grasp paradox and greater truths.

It is beneath the fears of the narrow Egoic system where one finds the curiosity and courage that is willing to risk and accept what unfolds, driven by a desire to connect (Grant, 1996). Surrender releases the perceived control to which the Ego clings and simultaneously releases of the burden of being in control (Branscomb, 1991). Surrender eases the burden and grip of Egoic boundary control, relaxing narcissistic muscles in order to also flex and build the unintentionally neglected moral muscles.

#### *Exercising Character Muscles*

Using my visual method of representing dualities, this is the comparative representation of a healthy ego situated in the dual nature of human experience:

self-----ego-----community  
...or the part-----ego-----the whole

Whereas, this is the comparative representation of the Ego:

self-----Ego-----community

Community, or the whole, consists of the others with which one is in relationship. In a state of polarity, others in a community can become the Others against which the Ego resists. The degree of resistance by the Ego varies depending on the perceived threat to the Ego by Other.

In this display, it is easier to see how the West's intentions to build up the individual have inadvertently shifted the ego's role and morphed it into the Ego that sides with the self, sometimes in lieu of others. Only from our current place in time is this more readily apparent. Growing conversations about the evolution of consciousness highlight this phenomenon (Elgin, 1993; Goswami, 1993; Hawkins, 2002; Wilber, 1996, 2001). New discussions in psychological literature are also addressing the cultural influences that entice the Ego to side with the self. These discussions highlight the paradox of abundance and the irony of having abundant material



goods while still remaining unhappy and even growing increasingly frustrated (Easterbrook, 2003; Myers, 2001; Schwartz, 2004).

The link between Ego frustration and the longing to be in communion with others is as old as psychoanalysis (Ghent, 1990). There is a deep desire to be released from the burden of control (Branscomb, 1991). The challenge continues: to rebalance human functioning toward greater emphasis on the moral character side of the spectrum. Rather than:

narcissism.....Ego ..... moral considerations  
the healthy ego appears as:

innate needs.....ego..... moral considerations  
The fear of the unknown and of Other is simply a condition of pre-understanding (Kearney, 2003), under which lies the desire to practice charity and surrender (Ghent, 1990; Leary, 2004). Our psyche can detect the atrophy of our moral muscles which are longing to be flexed.

The ability to surrender is a powerful indicator of one's commitment to personal development (Mackura, 2004). When we are gentle about initial efforts to exercise new behavior, we wean the body from one state into another. The goal is for a permanent shift of the Ego into the form of the ego (Tiebout, 1954), but overcoming the Ego is slow, repetitive and seemingly endless (Shapiro & Soidla, 2004). Because character muscles are intangible, one can not see that which changes, but one can observe the shifts in behavior (Tiebout, 1954) which evidence shifts in Ego position and the growth of character.

An instrument, called The Surrender Scale (Reinert, 1992, 1997), could be one gauge by which to quantify the flex of moral muscles. It was created largely on the work of Tiebout (1953, 1954, 1961) and the four keys that Tiebout recognized as being involved with the act of surrender for alcoholics. Those keys are: accepting one's limitations; giving up control to a higher power; shifting aggressive and negative feelings to more positive ones; and sensing unity with the world (Reinert, 1997). The instrument is a 25-item questionnaire that asks about openness, acceptance, trust, hope, higher powers, control, wisdom and personal growth themes, unity, and flexibility. High scores of surrender correlate to lower levels of psychopathology - such as depression, paranoia, and anxiety - and lower tendencies for Egoic control orientation (Reinert, 1997). This is consistent with Tiebout's (1949, 1953, 1954, 1961) observations that surrender reduces narcissism, provides for greater acceptance of what *is*, and elicits a more peaceful attitude. This evidences a shift in the function of the Ego toward that of the ego.

Other results from the use of The Surrender Scale show a relationship between surrender and a greater sense of God-mediated control, which is also consistent with Tiebout's (1949, 1953, 1954, 1961) interpretation of surrender and the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous. I am cautious about this particular result because I interpret some of the questions in the instrument as potentially leading in nature. Noteworthy is the correlation between surrendering and the participants' sense of gaining greater personal control, which is also consistent with the literature. Reinert (1997) admits that the instrument needs further research to determine its applicability, but it has been sufficiently tested to deem it reasonably reliable and valid in measuring surrender as a construct. It therefore provides a tool for more empirical studies and can potentially help to illuminate the internal shifts that occur which effect external changes in behavior. It also validates the theory and practical observations noted in the literature.

Surrender is an act that massages the rigidity of the Ego making it more flexible, but because of the Ego's stubbornness, initial experiences of surrender tend to be forced rather than chosen. The West's focus on individuality has been an asset in strengthening the ego, but ego strengthening has overextended itself into Egoic individualism. Having shifted dysfunctionally to

the narcissistic side of ego function, the Ego needs to responsibly exercise its muscles of moral character to build up the influence of communal and moral values in its choices for behavior.

When we act with strength of character, we satisfy the needs of the Ego – not necessarily the narcissistic *wants* of the Ego, but the *needs* of the Ego – and affect our own well-being. This is corroborated by the research findings in the burgeoning new field of positive psychology.

#### Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is not mentioned in the literature on surrender, nor does it represent a *theme* of surrender. I include it here because of the haunting parallel between the keys and outcomes of surrender and the character strengths upon which the field of positive psychology grounds its work.

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the field of psychology erred by focusing too much attention on the deficiencies of people: gradually pathologizing every human problem; neglecting the wellness of people and the impact of environments; and contributing very little to the understanding of human strengths (Maddux, 2002; Seligman, 2002; Snyder & Lopez, 2002; Wright & Lopez, 2002).

Prominent predecessors of positive psychology include Allport, Cattell, and Eysenck with their focus on trait theory, and Kelly, Rogers, Maslow, and May with their focus on existential and humanistic theories; but much of their work was theoretical and lacked the empirical evidence necessary to attract attention and gain research dollars (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2003; Seligman, 2002). The greatest shift in psychological research and literature occurred in the late 1990's when Martin Seligman, as the then-president of the American Psychiatric Association, stressed that there is more to well-being than the absence of illness and that people want lives that are happy and meaningful (Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology seeks to establish and improve an individual's sense of well-being by focusing on their strengths, as well as helping them build up strengths of character overall.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) created a classification handbook of character strengths in an effort to formalize the field of positive psychology and provide a diagnostic manual as a companion to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychological Association's means of labeling and identifying pathologies. They identified character strengths that were determined to have global value and which, when in place or enhanced, have been found to have direct, positive impact on personal well-being. The strengths of character and their subcategories as listed in the handbook (p.ix- xi) are as follows:

#### Wisdom and Knowledge

Creativity [Originality, Ingenuity]

Curiosity [Interest, Novelty-Seeking, Openness to Experience]

Open-Mindedness [Judgment, Critical Thinking]

Love of Learning

Perspective [Wisdom]

#### Courage

Bravery [Valor]

Persistence [Perseverance, Industriousness]

Integrity [Authenticity, Honesty]

Vitality [Zest, Enthusiasm, Vigor, Energy]

#### Humanity

Love

Kindness [Generosity, Nurturance, Care, Compassion, Altruistic Love,

- “Niceness”]
- Social Intelligence [Emotional Intelligence, Personal Intelligence]
- Justice
  - Citizenship [Social Responsibility, Loyalty, Teamwork]
  - Fairness
  - Leadership
- Temperance
  - Forgiveness and Mercy
  - Humility and Modesty
  - Prudence
  - Self-Regulation [Self-Control]
- Transcendence
  - Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [Awe, Wonder, Elevation]
  - Gratitude
  - Hope [Optimism, Future-Mindedness, Future Orientation]
  - Humor [Playfulness]
  - Spirituality [Religiousness, Faith, Purpose]

One can quickly recognize a familiarity with the terms in this list and many of those that have been identified as keys that enable surrender or outcomes of surrender. I offer a closer inspection.

“Although the specific content of spiritual beliefs varies, all cultures have a concept of an ultimate, transcendent, sacred, and divine force” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 601). Since *spirituality* is identified globally as a recognized character strength and is so significant in the success of Alcoholics Anonymous and addiction recovery, it argues for the object to which one can surrender: a higher power.

If one wishes to negate spiritual influences, many other character strengths align with aspects of surrender. *Creativity*, while not designated as either a key or an outcome of surrender, is a trait of surrender itself; surrender is a creative state (Branscomb, 1993; Tiebout, 1949). *Openness to experience* has been shown to be both a key and an outcome of surrender. *Wisdom* is an outcome of surrender and once gained helps to enable successive acts of surrender; so too with *Compassion*, and *Humility*. *Courage*, *Honesty*, and *Hope* have all been identified as keys to surrender. *Industriousness* was not mentioned in the literature by name, but it is representative of *flexibility* and *adaptability*, which are outcomes of surrender. Likewise, *Social Intelligence* was not mentioned by name in relation to surrender, but its deployment of *patience* and *tolerance* are outcomes of surrender. Clearly, *Self-Regulation* as a character strength is associated with the entire conversation about surrender: Ego management.

It is interesting that the subject of ego, taken from the index of the handbook (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), is only mentioned in specific association with the strengths of kindness, integrity, wisdom, and perspective. I offer some brief discussion for each of these.

*Kindness* is a strength that theoretically results from normal psychosocial development between the ages of 25 to 50 (Erikson, 1963). “Despite the massive literature on moral development in education and guidance, surprisingly little seems to be known about how to encourage kindness and altruism directly” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 333).

*Integrity* is described as the regular pattern of behavior that espouses values which treat others with care (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It is more than being truthful or nice; it includes taking responsibility for one’s thoughts, feelings, and actions with the deliberate inclusion of

others, in addition to awareness of self. The concept of psychological integrity had its greatest expression in the humanistic psychologies of the 1960's, but despite its relevance in applied settings, "the humanistic perspective has faded from the theoretical mainstream of social psychology which is now dominated by more cognitive theories" (p. 252).

Despite the minimal mention of ego in the handbook (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), the main thrust of its mention stresses that resilience of ego - the capacity to find meaning in stressful situations - assists in the development of wisdom, and wisdom is a prized character strength. Wisdom is considered the ability to coordinate information for its deliberate use to improve individual and collective well-being. It is inhibited by Egocentrism and the traits of narcissism. *Wisdom* is most closely associated with the character strength of *perspective*, which aligns with the key and outcome of surrender known as *openness*. It has generally been understood that wisdom results from successful aging, or the completion of Erikson's last stage of psychosocial development called ego integrity (Erikson, 1963; Papalia et al., 2004). Unfortunately, this capacity is largely gained from age 50 onward. Fortunately, recent research and findings strongly imply that interventions at ages as early as 15 years can nurture the development of both perspective and wisdom (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

This should be no surprise considering the literature on cultural rituals of rites of passage and the intentional instigation of wisdom development in adolescents mentioned early in this article (Branscomb, 1991, 1993; Halifax, 1999, Houston, 1985). The subject of wisdom also showed up in several other articles cited on surrender. Wisdom has been found to result from specific guidance by others and motivated by both rational and spiritual influences (Levitt, 1999). Humanistic psychology seeks to assist in the deliberate development and optimization of human potential and views increased wisdom as a measure of progress (Levitt et al., 2005), and yet humanistic approaches to psychotherapy and human development have gone largely unutilized (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and underdeveloped because they present an overly optimistic impression of humankind that cannot be studied empirically (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2003). Wisdom is specifically identified as an outcome of surrender (Tiebout, 1949) and it is an attribute that is specifically measured in The Surrender Scale instrument (Reinert, 1997). It seems safe to say that surrender flexes character muscles, making the Ego more resilient and fostering the development of wisdom.

Wisdom and perspective seem particularly significant in personal development and well-being. Efforts do exist in the educational system to attempt to impart wisdom and perspective through such methods as reflective and dialectic thinking, but wisdom is not gained by imparting information, rather through cognitive and affective experiential processes that underlie wise action and its attainment (Reznitskaya & Sternberg, 2004). This expresses a general concern regarding all character strengths: the challenge to *teach* them in Western culture.

The handbook of character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) discusses interventions for every strength, and *Positive Psychology in Practice* (Linley & Joseph, 2004) attempts to articulate a move from theory into practice regarding strength development. The literature on positive psychology consensually expresses the need for further research to discern more methods for the development of character strengths.

What seems most poignant in comparing surrender to strengths of character is that surrender seems to have a direct effect on many of the strengths. The high correlation between the keys and outcomes of surrender and their duplication on the list of character strengths affords reason to posit that one act of surrender can build up many character strengths, especially if

enacted proactively rather than via crisis. Therefore, surrender can have a direct, positive effect on personal well-being, character development, and collective well-being.

It is enticing *and responsible* to look further into the phenomenon of surrender. I have offered several suggestions for research efforts in this article, and there are plenty more. It appears that any efforts will mutually benefit human development across the spectrum from dysfunction to optimal function. As a researcher, I am personally interested in what can assist proactive surrender from a state of normality, such that we can realize and optimize our potential and even expand beyond our current capacities.

#### Synopsis

Because of the length of this article, I offer a flash review of it here to help loop everything together. I follow the organizational flow of the article content, so this synopsis may also serve as an exaggerated table of contents and provide navigation to reference specific details of interest within the article. I urge readers to use this section only as a bluish exposure to the topic of surrender and to make sure that any citation of comments here is properly associated with the authors cited within the larger text.

#### *Transformation*

Overall, this article presents literary research - largely from the field of psychology - on the phenomenon of surrender. I identify surrender as the pivotal act that advances us in the process of transformation after encountering a disorienting dilemma. Such dilemmas occur when we meet Other. Surrender allows for the suspension of certainties to make room for the examination and refinement of our taken-for-granted beliefs. Surrender and transformation help to improve our relationships with self and Other and enhance personal and collective well-being.

#### *Surrender – Historical Review*

The literature on surrender debuted in 1949 in discussions about alcoholism and recovery. Over time, other pockets of discussion appear, such as those addressing surrender in psychotherapy or trauma therapy. Yet, there is no obvious strength of historical development of the subject.

The bulk of literature on surrender hails from the pathology side of human functioning. Meager mention is made of its potential role in overall personal development, especially development beyond normality. This is surprising since numerous authors voice their concern about the lack of research on surrender and express the value that such research could have in further developing therapeutic methods and assisting personal development.

It does appear that initial surrender experiences tend to be more shattering and tend to result from crisis. With repeated experiences, surrender can become less jarring and instigated by choice.

#### *Themes of Surrender*

##### *Cultural Distinctions*

Western culture tends to consider surrender as an act of defeat and it is therefore resisted. Western approaches to human development are geared toward individuality and understood more in terms of stages that are somewhat consequential to aging. Such stages are not necessarily transformative. Eastern cultures are communally focused and have more spiritual relationships to the term of surrender and its implementation in individual and communal development. Indigenous societies are particularly supportive of the role of surrender in personal development and even sanction it through instigative rites of passage for adolescents. All three cultures – West, East, and Indigenous – value the human element; they just differ in their understanding and use of surrender in the process of human development.

*Surrender Defined*

The refreshed view of surrender provided herein – surrender as resilient rather than resistant - reveals that surrender is fulfilling and vibrant, not defeatist and passive. Surrender alchemically dissolves the Ego's inner conflict that arises from its desire *for* control and its simultaneous desire to *release* control. Surrender is a faithful gesture that actualizes the universal longing to know and be known.

*Types of Surrender*

Surrender is less the subject of empirical study than it is an act and state that practitioners have been able to discern from professional observations. Authors have variously attempted to define surrender with adjectives such as: recovery, therapeutic, altruistic, cathartic, primary, transformative, and safe. One author attempts to distinguish between surrender, surrender-to and false surrender.

*Conscious or Unconscious*

While there is no obvious consensus as to whether surrender is a conscious or an unconscious act, or whether it is voluntary or involuntary, the literature does not discount that it can be both conscious and voluntary. It seems that, the stronger the influence of the Ego, the more likely that surrender is unconscious, involuntary, and borne of crisis. Reciprocally, the more the Ego functions as the ego, the more likely that surrender is conscious and voluntarily borne of proactive choice.

*Responsibility*

Personal responsibility thrives in relation to surrender; it is not absolved by it. There is the responsibility to notice opportunities for surrender; the responsibility to engage them; and the need to remain responsible for subsequent behaviors while in the state of surrender. Surrender requires active involvement while not controlling the situation for outcomes. Responsible application of surrender allows for incremental growth: a proactive investment in personal development. Neglect of responsibility avoids surrender and is a gamble.

*Benefits and Outcomes of Surrender*

The benefits and outcomes of surrender are abundant. They are specifically identified in the article, providing a rich list that can entice the Ego to act. Overall, initial experiences of surrender can be loaded with anxiety and the multitude of benefits may not necessarily arise spontaneously. Also, fear and resistance can remain as emotional components in successive acts of surrender; they are not necessarily eliminated from human experience.

*Keys That Enable Surrender*

One need not surrender to everyone and every situation, and there are criteria to discern the wisdom of doing so. If one wishes to surrender, there are numerous keys which help to enable it. They fall into two categories: internal/subjective and external/objective. Keys facilitate surrender but do not guarantee that it will occur. There is no magic formula to suggest which keys are required in a given situation.

*Trust*

By far, trust is identified as *the* most key ingredient for surrender to occur, both internally and externally. Trust can be singularly or multiply placed in a higher power, self, other, or Other. Trust provides the freedom to *not* know and engage the unknown.

*The Unknown; and The Present Moment*

The unknown into which one surrenders is the place of mystery where contradictory phenomena can exist without judgment or confusion and curiosities can be pursued. Surrender and the unknown exist in the present moment: the gap in the past-future continuum. Surrender

liberates one from attachments and expectations which are the very basis of fears. While fear may never be fully overcome, its influence can become minimized over time.

#### *Paradox*

Paradox can only exist when there are expectations. Expectations tend to represent the Ego's agenda and intention to judge. When the Ego surrenders to what *is*, the truth in paradox is revealed.

#### *Ego and Polarities*

The Ego's narcissistic ways thwart its deepest desire to know other and to be known. Rather than accepting the manifest dualities of self and other that are neutral, the Ego severs dual connections and creates the charged state that polarizes self against Other. This excites selfish and defensive behaviors. Because surrender reduces the narcissistic tendencies of the Ego, it helps to minimize the defensive influence of primal brain function and shift the Ego toward higher order brain function. This is necessary in today's complex world that demands higher order mental functioning and wise use of the technological and scientific advancements we create.

Surrender helps the Ego release its *perceived sovereign* control and helps it recognize and gain its *actual contextualized* control. Surrender is an exercise in flexing our moral muscles rather than our narcissistic muscles and shifts the Ego to more balanced ego function.

#### *Positive Psychology*

The burgeoning field of positive psychology approaches psychological well-being from the normative side of health. Globally identified character strengths ground the work of positive psychology, and the majority of these strengths are remarkably duplicative of the very benefits and keys of surrender. It appears that one act of surrender could have a sweeping impact on numerous character strengths: the flexing of moral character.

#### *General Comments*

The literature reveals that surrender is a nameable act that occurs in therapeutic recoveries and processes of human development. There is insignificant mention of the role that surrender can play in sub-clinical cases or in development past the state of normality, yet the strength of its potential in that role has been examined and highly evidenced in this article.

Several authors stress their similar beliefs in surrender's purposeful and beneficial role in psychological health and the need for further research about it. There is slim indication that their voices have been heard.

Surrender is a psychological geography waiting to be discovered. Several suggestions have been made within this article to highlight potential research projects. Because surrender spans human experience, numerous other research proposals could easily be suggested as well. While I have my own research interests, I believe that any efforts to further understand surrender will be significant in assisting human development overall.

By further researching surrender, we can also: develop a common vocabulary to speak about shared observations of it; mutually evolve professional discussions across disciplines; and move beyond theory into practical applications for purposeful human development. Most notably, further research about surrender can help us widen the gateway for our conscious development and optimal stewardship of our potentials!

#### *Closing Comments*

I have housed this entire article in human science literature. I struggle to close it without sharing a striking parallel to spiritual texts.

As one example, the biblical verse of Matthew 6:33 (New American Standard Bible) says to “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”: seek *first* to act in trust and faith, *then* benefits arise. All spiritual traditions point to the role of surrender as pivotal in personal development and the move toward optimal function known as enlightenment. Now, after thorough examination, we see that scientific literature says the exact same thing.

Based on literature from the field of psychology, we have learned that surrender is hugely instrumental in growing our selves, our relationships with others, and opening up the greater potentials embedded within us. We have also learned that we must trust in someone or something and ultimately *first* act to release our attachment to perceived certainties and control *in order to* rest in the benefits of the state of surrender. First act in trust, then benefits arise.

*In addition*, psychological literature has also provided very practical and detailed information that helps to build a bridge over the chasm of our fears: the fears that thwart transformation. Behind us, we have the tower of identified keys that help to enable an act of surrender. In front of us, on the other side of the chasm, we have the tower of benefits and outcomes that can magnetize us forward. When we surrender, the bridge is established.

Before this literature review, surrender may have been visualized as a certain launch into the chasm of fears. Now, it is my great hope that surrender can be seen more as a stage of flight over the chasm, thrust by the keys that enable it and mobilized forward by the benefits of it. Surrender is the sublime state where the loft of trust and faith carries us from the rim of Egoic attachments to an alchemical place of transformational knowing.

As stated in the introduction, surrender is a tool that we can willfully employ for beneficial development. From our collective toolbox filled with the keys and benefits of surrender, we can assemble the tool to strategically match our individualized needs. Each time we craft and use the tool of surrender, we snip an attachment that frees us to be lofted through heroic passage toward greater insights. Just imagine how we can build our tomorrows based on how we utilize our tools at hand today!

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